The Missing and Murdered Women of Vancouver:

Framing Inequality in Media Discourse in the *Vancouver Sun* (2006-2011)

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Abstract

This thesis identifies and analyzes media narratives pertaining to the cases of missing and murdered women of Vancouver, published in the *Vancouver Sun* from 2006-11. Feminist and postcolonial feminist theories are drawn upon to explain the origin and persistence of the dominant narratives as expressions of long-standing societal ideologies concerning marginalized and Aboriginal women in Canada. Employing a frame analysis method associated with critical discourse analysis (CDA), the research accomplishes three related objectives. The first updates the work of Jiwani and Young (2006) by re-identifying the four dominant narratives they uncovered in *the Vancouver Sun* from 2001-06: police inefficiency; Pickton as the isolated deviant; the house of horrors crime scene; and the persistent grouping of the women victims as Aboriginal. The second research objective identifies and analyzes new media frames in the *Sun* that emerged after 2006, including: attempts to deconstruct the psychology of the perpetrator' William Pickton, narratives pertaining to how to manage the problematic issues surrounding the women victims, as well as those related to what it means to be a deviant woman; readers' reactions to the crimes; tracing of the emergence of grassroots organizations and activism on behalf of the victims. The final research objective contrasts societal responses to the Downtown Eastside missing and murdered women's cases to those of Juarez, Mexico to illustrate that not only are cases of prolonged and extreme violence against large numbers of women not rare, they are responded to in ways that are unique to historical, political and cultural circumstance. In sum, the research demonstrates the importance of analyses of widely consumed media coverage, especially those pertaining to violence against women, Aboriginal women, women who live in poverty and those involved in the sex trade.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

As of 2010, there was an estimated 580 missing Indigenous women in Canada, a number many believe to be only a conservative approximation. Compounding this disturbing fact is that, as a group, Indigenous women make up less than 2% of the Canadian population. The Native Women's Association of Canada (2009) makes the startling point that if compared to the rest of the population, the death and disappearance rate of Indigenous women would be equivalent to over 18,000 Canadian women and girls missing or murdered in the past thirty years.

One of the particularly notorious locations for missing women is the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver (DTES). Close to 70 women have gone missing from this area in the past three decades, and the majority of them are Indigenous women (Amnesty International, 2004). Most of the women were impoverished and working in the sex trade for survival (DeVries, 2003). In 2007, a Port Coquitlam farmer was convicted of the second-degree murders of six of these missing women (Fong, 2007). He was also charged in the deaths of an additional twenty women (Matas, 2009) but due to the 2009 ruling against Pickton's appeal, the British Columbian Crown decided not to proceed with the twenty additional murder charges (Greenway & Skelton, 2010).

The case of the missing women on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and the trial of Port Coquitlam farmer Robert Pickton in 2007 garnered attention from media outlets across Canada. While most media interest in the case developed after Pickton was taken into custody on February 22, 2002, women had been disappearing from the Downtown Eastside for three decades. Nonetheless, it was only after what was deemed Canada's worst serial murder investigation and tales of forensic evidence including skulls and bone

fragments found on Pickton's farm that the media took notice. Given the magnitude and gravity of these horrendous acts, the proposed research aims to answer the following questions:

1. Why were women maimed and murdered for three decades before such incidents became newsworthy?
2. Was more attention paid to these crimes in the media after the arrest of Robert Pickton, and if so, how and to what extent did media frame its attention?
3. What, if anything, does media attention in terms of coverage and content tell us about racism, sexism and post-colonial ideology in Canada?

This thesis answers these questions beginning with a tracing of the recent history of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), drawing specifically from a study of media narratives of the missing women's cases conducted by Jiwani and Young (2006). In addition, the many important events that occurred after Jiwani and Young's research that arguably impact how the missing and murdered women's cases were framed in the media are investigated. These events included the trial of Pickton and the uncovering of physical evidence that contributed to the reported graphic nature of the crimes as well as the conviction of Pickton. Lastly, the continued media debate as to whether Pickton's first trial was fair is discussed as well as the question of whether or not he should stand trial for 20 other murder charges (although a 2010 ruling has indicated that this will not occur) (Greenaway & Skelton, 2010).

Additionally and for the sake of analytical contrast, this thesis also briefly considers the case of missing women from Juárez, Mexico, where the murders quickly became a public issue with a collective response from not only the local community, but

also from academics and activists across the world, the United States government, the European Union and the United Nations, to name only a few. Unlike the missing women's cases in Canada, in Juárez the crimes were immediately labelled "femicide" and there was presidential recognition of this violence as directly against the women of Juárez.

The discussion to follow highlights the scholarly literature pertinent to these research questions. It begins with a description of the DTES followed by a discussion of the research methods and findings of Jiwani and Young's (2006) work on the media reports of the missing women's cases. The contrasting case of multiple femicide in Juárez, Mexico is then presented to show how media reportage of the Juarez cases differ from the DTES coverage and present a case for why the proposed research set in the Canadian context of the missing women from DTES is especially warranted at this time.

Chapter 1 begins with an overview of relevant scholarly literature, highlighting the discursive narratives of racism, gender, class and prostitution in the media, as well as the discursive creation of distance, selective criminalization and victim blaming. More specifically, the work of Jiwani and Young's (2006) research is explored in depth as it informs the methodological approach adopted in this research project. Chapter 2 continues from this discussion to expand on the research methods of media and discourse analysis, that guide this project. Previous studies are touched upon to give the reader concrete examples of discourse analysis. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and methodological limitations of this study as well as the rationale for the research methods chosen.

The analysis of data is presented in Chapter 3, beginning with an identification of the prominent frames and counter-frames employed by the media to discuss the cases of the missing women as well as excerpts from media to illustrate each frame and counter-frame category. What follows in Chapter 4 is a discussion of the research findings with reference to the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis with some consideration paid to directions for further study.

Chapter 1- Literature

The following discussion highlights scholarly literature relevant to the cases of missing women from the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, especially with respect to representations of race, gender and prostitution. Further, the role of media in developing and disseminating discourse related to these representations is considered to create a platform from which to discuss media coverage of femicide and post-colonialism in Canada more specifically.

To begin, the rationale for looking at these cases through a mediated lens is presented, followed by a discussion of the academic work on the aforementioned topics as they relate to media coverage and colonial ideology. Research and writing specifically on the subject of the missing women of Vancouver, including media coverage of the missing women and the Pickton case is highlighted.

Research on Media

The media, including but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, journalistic research, etc. are vital sources of information for the general public.

On the grand scale:

> North American, European and Australian research has found that at least nine out of ten people list the media as their most important source of information regarding crime, policing, the courts, and corrections (Wortley, 2003:55-56).

Adding to this and more specifically:

> The media not only reflects what is occurring in our society but also reinforces stereotypes of how woman are viewed, both as victims and perpetrators of violence. Therefore, how the news media covers this social problem is vitally important because the news media plays a major role in shaping public opinion and public policy, with stereotypes even becoming embedded in the judicial system (Wortley, 2003:1601).

News reports have the power to inform and shape not only the opinions held by the general public but also the content and direction of public policy. Because of it's power to affect people's beliefs and thus actions, the media also have the ability to perpetuate racist, sexist and elitist beliefs that further separate victims of violence and define what is worthy" of publicity (Meyers, 2004; Rome & Chermak, 1994) Many scholars have analyzed what makes a media report "worth" reading/ watching/ listening to (Chibnall, 1977; Greer, 2003; Katz, 1987;). Factors such as the presence of conflict, loss of life, descriptions of violence, the geographical proximity of the reporting and the social prominence of those involved are all said to be key factors in making a report newsworthy. In the cases of the missing and murdered women from the DTES, one might be inclined to ask why, since the cases involved extreme violence and murder against women in regions adjacent to our own backyards, did few take notice? Why were these women allowed to disappear without it being declared a national emergency and what role did media play in under-reporting these horrific events?

Salmi (2006) and Valverde (2006) identify oppressive texts used by the media and how these texts exacerbate social oppression and neglect. For example, Jamil Salmi (2004) outlines four common types of mediated oppressive tactics: 1) superficiality 2)

lack of proportion 3) excessive individualization and 4) ideological one-sidedness. Superficiality commonly takes the form of sensationalized gore narratives with much lesser mention of social circumstances that placed the women in such circumstances. This is referred to by Marianne Valverde to as “The Jack the Ripper” phenomenon and is discussed in depth by Valverde (2006).

Salmi’s second category concerning lack of proportion pertains to the fact that media tends to cover the perpetrator(s) more intensely than the victim(s). Excessive individualization is Salmi’s third type of oppressive media tactic, which works to ‘isolate individual actions and behaviors from a social context” (Salmi, 2004:64). Both strategies under-emphasize social context and the governmental and societal neglect that put victims into such situations in the first place. Further, ideological one-sidedness reflects discourses of oppression pertaining to race, gender, prostitution and class, a media tactic that is discussed in greater detail later. In short, this type of media discourse reflects only the ideological views of the powerful (those who are creating the stories), which further inflicts a social, economic and physical toll on the victim population.

Race, Gender and Prostitution

In looking to scholarly research on portrayals of race, gender and prostitution in the media as well as the intersection of these factors, various studies have been conducted from which this thesis project draws. In her book *Race, Space and the Law: Un-mapping a White Settler Society* (2002), Razack devotes an entire chapter to the case of Pamela

Jean George. Pamela George was 28 years old, a member of the Salteaux First Nation, and single mother of two children when she was sexually assaulted, brutally beaten and left to die. Razack tells the story of the perpetrators, two young, white college-educated men, Steven Tyler Kummerfield and Alexander Dennis Ternowetsky. Both men were twenty years of age at the time of the assault and were from middle to upper class families. Both men had been drinking heavily when they approached George (Ternowetsky hid in the trunk of the car). After hesitation, George agreed to get into the car and the young men drove to the isolated outskirts of Regina. There the men forced her to perform oral sex, violently assaulted her and then left her to die.

Dr Modesto Escanlar, who testified for the Crown, described George's injuries as being consistent with blows from a blunt object. He stated that the beating gave Pamela George a broken nose, swollen eyes and hand, cuts on her face and lips and numerous bruises that covered her upper body, especially her head (Angus, 1997). The two men were subsequently charged with first-degree murder, but were eventually convicted of manslaughter, and sentenced to six and a half years in prison. According to a website dedicated to missing Native Women across Canada, Kummerfield was granted parole after serving less than four years of his sentence and Ternowetsky was granted day parole in August, 2000. He was then returned to prison in 2002 for committing violence against his current girlfriend (www.missingnativewomen.ca, 2004).

Soon after George's body was found, police spent three weeks rounding up those who they deemed "the usual suspects", i.e. street people, drug users, and Aboriginal men (Razack, 2002:145). In the media, Pamela George was presented as the racialized,

gendered and class opposite “other” in contrast to the two, white, middle to upper class male perpetrators. Details pertaining to Pamela George related only to her work in the sex trade, the needle marks on her arms and her patterns of alcohol abuse, thus shaping the victim as somehow undeserving of empathy by the all-white jury and white, male judge presiding over the case (ibid:249).

Moreover, as the trial moved on, the defense attorneys tried to argue that George was most likely killed by an Aboriginal man, and news reports often focused solely on how the trial and possible sentencing could potentially destroy the two young males’ lives and prospects for the future (ibid:151). Razack thus concludes that media narratives surrounding the murder of Pamela George are prime examples of oppressive treatment toward prostitutes, non-white individuals, women and the impoverished and how such persons are painted as the “other” in mediated discourse. She argues that such narratives are powerful illustrations of how the ideology of neo-colonialism is produced and perpetuated to this day.

Razack’s analysis of the case, however, lacks detail on specifically how such oppression and neglect was originally created and fails to connect the case to the broader theory of neo-colonialism. What the Pamela George case does offer are some important concepts, including the definition of the “other”, the criminalization of women working in the sex trade and the lack of empathy/sympathy given to them as victims. Along with the case of Pamela George, Razack adds insight and a useful conceptual framework that guides her discussion of prostitution to show that negative mediated discourses are part of a post-colonial ideology that exists today. She argues that bodies of sex-trade workers are

deemed unnatural and are thus often among those relegated to slums where white, male colonizers can come and go as they please. Areas of prostitution, as Razack notes, enable certain gender, race and class relations. The relatively elite men transgress borders to "indulge" and then return to their places of "respectability", leaving "contamination" behind (Razack, 1998:46-47).

Jennifer Nelson's (2008) work concerning the geography of racism in Africville, Nova Scotia, also shows how the factors of race, geographical space, and social class combine to physically and socially segregate a population, ending in the total annexation of their land in return for less-than appropriate compensation. In both instances, negative words were/are used (e.g. slum, wasteland) to describe the area, to document, analyze, market and photograph the "spectacles of the DTES" or the perils of Africville. Concerning the DTES, Culhane (2003: 595) found that exotic depictions in the media of drug use, sex, violence and crime not only disguise the harsh reality of living in poverty from the viewership but discourage the public from feeling empathy for those suffering. From here, we can infer that both geographical locations, due to systemic poverty and questionable policies and practices at all levels of government are portrayed as unsafe, unclean, and associated with disease, moral deficiency and crime. It is clear, however, that preservation of "respectable space" i.e. white middle class space, relies heavily on the containment of "slums" (Nelson, 2008: 41). The media thus adopts a particular distant gaze when reporting on areas like DTES, one that serves to further detach the general public from the suffering that occurs there (Nelson, 2008:69)

Scholarly research on the subject of Aboriginal representations in media describes Aboriginal women's representations as "strategic silences" in that they are not depicted as active agents in telling their stories (Harris 1991). Further, when their stories are reported by media, factors such as the lingering effects of the residential school system, for example, are seldom mentioned. Harris' work clearly emphasizes the link between the colonial atrocities of the past and the continued oppression of Aboriginal peoples in a way that is directly relevant to this thesis project. So too is Harding's (2006:221) research on historical representations of Aboriginal peoples in the news media showing that they are commonly associated with violence. Harding echoes Dara Culhane's idea of race-blindness in defining ethnocentrism as:

> …characterized by a creed of 'identical treatment, which emphasizes equality of opportunity and cultural pluralism while denying the existence of contemporary racist practices, attitudes and outcomes (Harding, 2006:206).

Blind to the structural causes of unequal standards of living, the "colonizer" constructs "dangerous classes" as one means by which a capitalist-based economy can remain blame-free (Brooks, 2002a:275).

When analyzing Aboriginal land claims in British Columbia, Harding finds that media representations contain striking commonalities including a) a tendency by news outlets to dichotomize Aboriginal peoples into an "us" and "them" distinction, b) the ideology that Aboriginal peoples were inherently inferior and thus must be controlled, c) the frame of the white male settler as saving the primitive Aboriginal peoples and d) a tendency to use general references to "Indians" and "Natives" rather than specifying the

over fifty First Nations of British Columbia (Harding, 2006: 217). Such discourse, says Harding, serves to protect dominant interests by depicting Native Canadians as inferior or threatening (Harding, 2006:205).

Wortley's (2003) analysis of racialized discourse in the Toronto print media revealed that whereas white crime is almost always attributed to individual pathology or immorality, Black crime is frequently blamed on Black and/or Caribbean cultural origins (see Wortley, 2003:55, for full case study). Further, whereas a crime committed against a young Black woman is normalized and explained by reference to lifestyle, dangerous neighbourhoods, etc. (see Wortley's full study for further details) the same crime committed against a young white woman victim is described as taking "decent citizens into the realm of crime" (Wortley, 2003:68).

Much research on the subject of gendered media discourse explores the constructed dichotomy of the woman as either the "Madonna" or the "whore" (Feinman, 1986; McLaughlin, 1991). This dichotomy reflects the belief that a woman is either pure, innocent, passive and most suitable for marriage and child-bearing or the opposite of these qualities and thus a whore who is seen as amoral, lacking femininity and not worthy of respect and dignity (Belknap, 2000). Balfour and Comack (2006:28) further argue that the "lady-like" qualities of the middle to upper class female population define what is considered to be inherently feminine. Relating to the sexual dimension of this dichotomy, sexual promiscuity is especially seen as a sign of immorality for women whereas it is a normalized activity for men (Balfour & Comack 2006:: 28). McLaughlin's (1991) work complements this approach by adding narratives of respectability to the equation. She

finds that respectability is given to women deemed "virtuous" (i.e. mothers, wives, daughters) and that these women garner media attention because they are viewed as worthy of protection. In contrast, a female prostitute is viewed as the epitome of the "bad" woman, and therefore not worthy of our respect, attention and/or time (McLaughlin, 1991).

Meyers' (2004) work pairs discourse on race and gender in a unique study of television coverage of violence against Black women at the annual Freaknik festival in held in 1995 in Atlanta, Georgia. She shows that a number of sexual assaults on African-American women at the festival were erased by various news accounts that explained the violence as brought about by the victims themselves (Meyers, 2004:113) The victims were portrayed in television coverage as "jezebels, welfare cheats, and matriarchs" accompanied by photos of women in short skirts, inferring a victim-blaming rationale.

In the scholarly literature concerning prostitution and mediated discourses, perhaps the most cited is that of Lowman (2000:3), who coined the term "discourse of disposal". Conducting a quantitative analysis of the media coverage of the murders of sex trade workers in British Columbia from 1964 to 1998 (some of these cases are included in this thesis), Lowman shows that the majority of articles relating to prostitution describe the workers as a "public nuisance" with continuous efforts to push sex trade activity into the shadows of the city. Ongoing attempts to "get rid" of prostitution (Gayle, 1999) and lobbying of government by local citizens resulted in the enactment of the 1985 Canadian law prohibiting communication for the purpose of prostitution which forced sex trade workers into dimly lit, unsafe and abandoned areas of Vancouver (Lowman, 2000).

Lowman concludes that it is this narrative of disposal that continues to separate us from them, both cognitively and spatially. Pushing prostitution to the periphery made sex-trade workers "easy targets" for violence such that there was an increase in homicides of prostitutes in the 1980's and 1990's (Lowman, 2000).

Furthermore, Lowman states that media reports from the *Vancouver Sun* in the late 1990's focused on defending the lack of attention paid to the missing women. Police asserted that many street-involved women don't have close ties to family and/or may deliberately go 'missing' for a number of reasons, including their desire to evade police (Lowman, 2000:996) More harshly Vancouver mayor Phillip Owen was reported as declaring:

> Because there was no evidence of a serial killer, municipal authorities were not prepared to fund a location service for prostitutes (Stall, 1999: The Province, pp. pA16).

Lowman (2000: 10) argues that these mediated narratives were consistent despite the fact that other journalists did find that "many of the women did have close family ties and well-established social habits". Further, Fedec (2002) discusses another important narrative that has dominated media discourse on prostitution, namely that of victims of the sex trade as offenders only (Fedec, 2002:254).

The Downtown Eastside and the Media

Research conducted on the Downtown Eastside itself includes historical studies that emphasize the growing dynamics of the sex trade in Vancouver, along with research

more recently conducted on the cases of the missing women. Among the foremost of historical writers and researchers on the topic of the sex-trade history of the DTES is Daniel Francis (2006). He argues that in early, twentieth-century Vancouver, much of the business of selling sex was conducted behind closed doors on the dangerous streets of the inner city. DeVries (2003) and LaBossiere Huebner (2003) add that the neo-liberal policy of deinstitutionalization in the 1970's and the "cleanup" of downtown Vancouver for Expo '86 pushed sex trade workers further East away from residential areas and into badly lit strips of the "dangerous" areas of the city. The Downtown Eastside became famously known as the "poorest postal code in Canada" riddled with poverty, drug use and survival sex (DeVries, 2003:95).

As early as the late 1970's, women began to go missing on Vancouver's DTES and in the past three decades, the number of missing women has increased steadily (Francis, 2006). Analyses of media coverage by various academics and journalists agree that the cases of missing women were under-reported. Bell (2000) argues that the issue of missing women was not taken seriously because these women were not seen as worthy victims because of their class status. Further, Comack and Balfour (2004:62) found that those who reported the women missing were also not seen as credible and were easily dismissed as a "drugged-up hooker". Lowman (2000) credited the dismissal to a lack of understanding of the transient and the unpredictable nature of work in the sex trade.

Comack and Balfour (2004) argue that if a middle or upper-class white woman was missing there would be an uproar and no resources would be spared in the search for her. For example, recent probes into the disappearances of young Madeline McCann - a

middle-class, white daughter of doctors who went missing while vacationing with her parents in Portugal in 2007 (de Queiroz, Inter Press, 2007**)** and Natalee Holloway – an 18 year old, middle-class, white youth from Atlanta who went missing on a class trip to Aruba in 2005 (Davis, 2005), led to massive international news pleas and offers of rewards for their return. Comack and Balfour (2004) argue that while the level of sympathy for missing middle to upper-class young, white women is high because they are seen as pure and innocent, this is not the case for sex-trade workers because they are seen as choosing their destinies and are therefore unworthy of compassion.

Jennifer England (2004) contributes to this argument by distinguishing between hyper-invisibility and hyper-visibility. England's research on sex-trade workers of Vancouver's DTES shows that these women are made visible in the media concerning their criminal activity (drug use, prostitution) but the poverty and violence against their bodies remains hidden (England, 2004). Additionally, Mason's (2002) work on violence as a "spectacle" refers to the irony that while there was an increase in surveillance technologies implemented in the DTES, it did not render these women visible as victims. Culhane's (2003) study on the representation of prostitution on the DTES of Vancouver in the media reveals a narrative of neglect. She found that the DTES was often described as a "place apart" by the media, with continuous talk of "epidemics", whether of the public health kind or legal, which further depicted the DTES as a "containment zone" for those deemed by society as deviant and uncontrollable (Culhane, 2003:594).

With respect to the cases of the missing women, Francis (2006) maintains that by the year 2000 there had been little to no progress made. Although a list of over six

hundred names of potential suspects had been drawn up in 2001, the lack of personnel, resources and political will ensured little follow-up. But in 2002, things changed. Robert Matas, an investigative journalist for the *Globe and Mail*, discusses a major break in the missing women's cases in 2007. Police had received a tip regarding weapons on the farm of Robert Pickton and a search warrant for the property was executed. During the subsequent search, police stumbled upon evidence they believed to be linked to the missing women's cases, including an inhaler belonging to Sereena Abotsway, one of the missing women (Matas, 2007). Matas also maintains that police discovered the body parts of some of the missing women *by accident* while they were checking a bad smell coming from a freezer during a power outage. Forensic experts searched for DNA evidence and the details of their discoveries flooded onto television reports across Canada. Body parts found in jars in freezers and media theories that Pickton killed these women and then fed them to his pigs resulted in a narrative which focused exclusively on the "gore" of the case. The missing women soon became merely *objects* in this story (Ward, 2006).

After a three-year long study of the missing women's investigation, the case against Robert Pickton and the subject of Pickton himself, investigative journalist, Stevie Cameron claims that it was after the raid of the Pickton farm that the public and media became "fascinated" with the idea that we may have witnessed the work of Canada's most prolific serial killer. The record was previously held by Clifford Olson, who was convicted of murdering eleven children and youth and is now serving eleven consecutive life sentences (Cameron, 2007:91). Cameron argues that as time progressed, the media

fascination with this atrocious man who may hold a new horrific Canadian record only grew.

Discourse analyses of the media portrayal of the DTES and the cases of the missing women include the work of Beverly Pitman (2002), who analyzes early coverage of the case from the mid to late 1990's. In summary, she reveals that media reports primarily focused on three issues in their coverage:

- Police inefficiency
- A legitimacy crisis as to who was "responsible" for looking into the cases
- The coverage of the case by the television show, *America's Most Wanted*, which only further reinforced emphasis on the possibility of a serial killer and the fact that the disappearances occurred in "bad neighborhoods". Casting a white woman in the re-enactments, the show side-stepped the role that Aboriginality had in the case.

Pitman's analysis also identifies some media coverage that fostered a more sympathetic view of the missing women cases. It began with the reporting of the actions of a grassroots movement that developed in response to the cases and included the voices of some family members of the missing women. One notable account is the story of Sarah deVries, a missing woman, whose white, middle-class family was seemingly "dragged" into the seedy underworld of the DTES. Featuring the grief and despair of a white, middle class family finally got the attention of the majority of Canadians.

Soon after Pitman's work, *Vancouver Sun* journalists, Linsday Kines and Kim Bolan, launched a journalistic investigation into the missing women's cases. The eleven-

part series uncovered the evidence that the number of missing women was actually higher than previously reported. Although sympathetic in its intent, negative discursive frames were dominant in the coverage, including but not limited to descriptions of the DTES as the "mean streets", and the portrayal of the women as "drug-addicted sex workers" (Jiwani and Young, 2006: 897) While the journalists noted that many of the missing women were Aboriginal, they more strongly emphasized through individual stories that the women had "so much in common" in the form of drug addiction, living in the DTES, and involvement in prostitution. Jiwani and Young describe this coverage as exhibiting somewhat of a victim-blaming rationale, thus assisting the reader to understand that these women met their tragic ends as a result of their own poor choices.

Following the arrest of Robert Pickton, Jiwani and Young (2006) conducted an analysis of the media narratives that surrounded the missing women's cases. Describing themselves as "feminist researchers investigating racialized and sexualized violence", they analyzed one hundred twenty-eight print articles from the *Vancouver Sun* dating from 2001-2006. Their study highlights the item-content patterns that characterized the reports on the missing women, including how Aboriginality and prostitution were played out and reported in the coverage, how the acts of violence were reduced to the actions of single men ("monsters") and to particular women's naturalized susceptibility to violence (Lakeman, 2005:897). In short, Jiwani and Young's study not only made the case intelligible to audiences but also provided incontrovertible evidence that "little attention has been paid to the women." From their research, they conclude that these women "were located beyond the pale of civilized society" (Jiwani, Young, 2006:898).

More specifically, Jiwani and Young's (2006) media content analysis named the following prevalent frames in the newspaper coverage of the cases:

1. An early, albeit mild, focus on police inefficiency as an excuse to why a number of women went missing without the issue becoming a major topic in news reports.
2. A focus on the individual perpetrator as some "isolated deviant" while ignoring the social and political aspects of the case.
3. A continued emphasis on the "house of horrors" with gory details, which effectively took away the dignity and personhood of each woman.
4. A persistent grouping of the women as "Aboriginals" and a reinforcing of stereotypes concerning Canada's First Nations which precluded identifying each woman on an individual basis.

They conclude their study by stating that "the prevailing and historically entrenched stereotypes about women, Aboriginality and sex trade work continue to demarcate the boundaries of respectability and degeneracy, interlocking in ways that situate these women's lives, even after death, in the margins" (2006: 895). Finally, they state that racializing the 'other' keeps elites' ideals intact and tools used to maintain segregation include the residential school system and forced migration which continuously kept Aboriginal Canadians in a colonized position.

Upon the arrest of Pickton, the media quickly focused on him as the alleged perpetrator, describing and speculating in great detail about his family background, his property, personal habits and alleged actions. Photographs of him and stories about his life began to dominate news media. This focus, primarily and at great length on the perpetrator, served to deflect attention away from media under-reporting of the missing women's cases. And, inaction on the part of both the police and media was initially set aside for coverage of depictions of a madman.

This thesis adopts the methodological approach of Jiwani and Young (2006) to update the investigation of media reportage of the case of the missing women of Vancouver's DTES from the year 2006 (where their analysis concludes) to the year 2011. This is especially important because since 2006, a number of new developments in the case have occurred. Events of the trial of Pickton were reported daily and an extensive post-trial reportage took place. Graphic evidence continued to be discovered and the public was thus made more aware of exactly how these women's lives ended. There has also been intensified social-activist work in the form of efforts to bring the lives and fates of the missing women into the spotlight.

This project therefore aims to answer the questions of whether and how media narratives have changed with the emergence of new forensic evidence, the conviction of Robert Pickton and the persistent efforts of victims' families and various groups to draw attention to the plight of the women of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. Further, it considers societal responses to the missing and murdered women's cases in comparison with a similar case of murdered women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. What follows is a

discussion of the Juárez situation and some consideration of the media narratives or frames that emerged for purposes of analytical contrast.

Juárez

In Juarez, Mexico, a somewhat similar war against women had been occurring since 1993. In response, there have been continuous, vocal calls from the victims' families, women's groups, worker's groups, etc., calling for an end to this savage violence against women. Many grassroots organizations have developed on the local, national and even international scene in response to this continuing crisis. The past President of Mexico (Vincente Fox), as well as many international organizations, have openly acknowledged this tragedy as "femicide". Hollywood movies, TV miniseries, art exhibits, works of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, documentaries, academic conferences, etc. have served to call attention to the cases and with a fair amount of success. Also, international organizations such as the United Nations, Amnesty International, and the US State Department have all taken notice.

Juárez is a city of almost 1.5 million people located on the United States-Mexico border directly across from El Paso, Texas. Historically, the city has been known for its lax laws and luring American military personnel and young men with promises of free-flowing alcohol, nightclubs and access to women (Arreola & Curtis, 1991). According to Melissa Wright (2004) Juárez women have played a significant part in early Juárez's' economy - as suppliers of sex. During the 20th century, young women and girls from

across Mexico migrated to Ciudad Juárez eventually making the city famous for its sexual availability of women.

With the fall of the Bracero Program in 1964, a diplomatic policy between the United States and Mexico that permitted temporary contract laborers from Mexico to work in the United States as agricultural workers on a seasonal basis, the Mexican Government launched the Border Industrialization Program (BIP) or the Maquiladora Program – border export processing - to solve the problem of rising unemployment caused by Mexican men returning to their home country out of work (Ferrante-Wallace, 2003).

Because of the cheap cost of labor and changes to US custom laws, the Maquiladoras attracted US big business (Ferrante-Wallace, 2003). Although the intention of the Maquiladora program was to hire Mexican men who were unemployed as a result of the end of the Bracero program, managers began to construct an idealized image of their desired worker (Salzinger, 1997), passive workers (i.e. women) who would work for lower wages and were easier to direct were the most sought-after employees.

One manager commented soon after the boom of the maquiladoras:

> 85% of the labour force is made up of women, since they're more disciplined, pay more attention to what they do, and get bored less [often] than men do" (Salzinger, 1997:551).

While the sex trade still existed and prospered, many women took jobs in maquiladoras to gain a sense of independence.

It was in the early 1980's that a serious debt crisis hit Mexico and shortly thereafter, wages dropped due to peso devaluation. As a consequence, the demand for maquila workers soared and managers brought in more and more male employees (Salzinger, 1997). Melissa Wright (2004) argues that by the 1990's the city economy had increasingly declined - the infrastructure was outdated and deteriorated, there was increasing crime and the drug trade was soaring. Faced with these issues, city and government officials began to devise plans to bring the city back to its previous prosperity. Similar to the case in DTES, models of urban cleansing were adopted, including the removal of sex workers from the streets (Melissa Wright, 2004). Also occurring at this time was the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which eliminated trade barriers between Mexico, the United States and Canada (Garwood, 2002). In essence, large US corporations could then outsource the production of their goods to Mexico and take advantage of minimal taxes and cheap labour due to lax labour laws (Garwood, 2002). And then there were the women.....

Arriola and Curtis (1991) describe most of the women found murdered in Juarez as the perfect victims because they came from poor backgrounds in a strongly patriarchal society. Essentially, it is believed that perpetrators won't be punished for victimizing a poor, maquiladora worker. "You have to look at the environment ... to find out who really is her killer," said Arriola, a feminist critical legal theorist (Washington-Valdez, 2002). Reports estimating the number of murdered and missing women vary greatly. All independent reports by *El Paso Times* reporter, Diana Washington Valdez (2006), estimate that "between 1993 and 2005, approximately 470 girls and women died violently in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Press reports generally estimate the number of

murder victims to be 400. The exact number of women missing likely will never be determined, but estimates vary from 250 to 450, which led to an outcry for justice on behalf of these women and their families (Luevano, 2008).

Scholarly Coverage of Juarez

The case of the murdered women of Ciudad, Juárez has been discussed by many academics and researchers, with emphasis on several factors including economic disparity, racism, patriarchy and changing gender roles in the country. Historian Emma Perez discusses the connection between the economics of the maquiladoras and the susceptibility of the women working in Juarez factories. More precisely, Tryon Woods (2002) claims that:

> "The maquiladoras represent the commodity exchange relationship of capitalism, come to symbolize prostitution" (Woods, 2002:142).

Indeed when typifying the victims, it was found that almost a quarter of the murdered women had worked in the maquiladoras. These victims were on the whole very young women (between the ages of 12 and 30); they were all from poor neighborhoods with substandard housing and other services, and their work life – which involved travelling in unsafe and unprotected areas often late at night in an effort to earn a living — put them at high risk for abduction and/or murder (Pearson, 2007). The link between the maquiladora industry and the exploitation of women's labour without consideration of personal safety and well-being is indeed an important issue identified by academics looking at the Juárez case.

Secondly, and indeed connected to the previous discussion on the economics of Juárez, is research conducted on the patriarchal societal system that exists in Mexico today. As Susan Tiano states:

> "For capitalism to benefit maximally from women's participation in both the capitalistic and domestic modes of production, the gender-based division of labour and the patriarchal relations that support it must be maintained" (Livingston, 2004:559).

Livingston adds that central to this assertion is the view of women as a source of cheap labour and that the connection between the murder of Juarese women and Mexico's patriarchal societal belief is obvious. Women are generally seen as objects of patriarchal society to be used as men wish (and they may be subject to violence if they do not comply). By failing to fully investigate the crimes against women, Livingston writes that the Mexican state and police officials reiterate their disregard for these victims of crime.

> "What all the murders have in common is that they are rooted in the unequal power relations between men and women, which place women in a position of greater vulnerability and thereby limit their ability to enjoy their rights to life, personal integrity, freedom, and due process" (Centre for Women's Global Leadership, 2006: para. 4).

Other writers point out that conflict commonly arises when gender roles begin to change in a historically patriarchal society. Julia Fregroso (2003) points out that the Latina woman's traditional role is in the home as wife and mother. Indeed, the most striking difference between the Juarez and DTES cases is that the Juarez mothers whose daughters fell victim to femicide in Juárez were quick to take their role as mothers into the public eye. Juárez mothers immediately demanded answers as to why their daughters never returned home. C.J. Bejarano (2002) has extensively researched this rise of

"motherist activism" in South America and the more broadly shifting gender roles there. Newly empowered women pose a serious threat to patriarchy and Luevano (2008:72) proposes that "the attempted destruction of working Mexican women indicates rebellion by Mexican men reasserting their machismo". Machismo essentially naturalizes the violence against women by shifting blame onto the bodies of the victims, for somehow they did not conform to what the ideal women should be (wife and mother confined to the private sphere) (Fregoso, 2003, 4–5).

Researchers have also been quick to uncover the role of racism in the Juárez cases. Bejarano (2002) observes that the majority of the women working the maquiladoras are mestizas, of "mixed blood" – those of Amerindian roots. This is indeed similar to the missing women's case in Vancouver where a significant percentage of the victims had Canadian Indigenous roots, clearly demonstrating that race remains an important factor in women's susceptibility to violence at the hands of men.

The term, *femicide,* was coined by Diana E.H. Russell in 1976 and defined as "the misogynist killing of women by men and a form of continuity of sexual assault" (Russell, 1992). Researchers of the Juárez case have argued that the crimes against women and girls of Juárez are clear instances of femicide. The crime of femicide is associated with a patriarchal system that looks at the simple act of being a woman and/or failing to be a particular kind of a woman as a defense for inflicting violence upon them. By defining and describing the crimes against women in Juárez as femicide with its many connotations, the cases gain a certain sense of urgency and outrage leading to attempts to end the crimes (Russell, 1992)

News Reports of Juarez

Upon the discovery of a murdered woman in 1993, that of 20-year-old Luz Yvonne de la O Garcia behind a downtown Juárez ballroom, the death was announced in brief passing in a local newspaper crime page in Juarez (Nathan, 1999). But soon after, local reporters and activists starting noticing a greater number of murders and it did not take long for women's groups, human rights organizations and friends and families of the victims to take up the cause and push for further investigations, all of which was widely documented in news reports.

The continued visibility of the crimes through numerous newspaper reports, academic research and activist work increased visibility of the women, even bringing the murders to international and UN attention. UN reporters visited, cross-country convoys were founded, and United States Senators visited the area and pushed for proper investigation and proactive work. In essence, the increased visibility made the case known to many across borders and various local initiatives led by women's groups called for legal reforms.

While there are marked similarities between the DTES and Cuidad, Juarez murders of women, there are also notable differences. Although the DTES is known as the poorest postal code in Canada, with HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and drug use rates that are the highest in the country and where many women, men and children work in the sex trade in an effort to survive, the City of Juárez far exceeds Vancouver as a city of extreme violence. Warring drug trafficking cartels, as well as widespread corruption, and other illegal activities characterize every-day life in Juarez. Nonetheless, even with its higher

rates of crime, it is impossible to walk through Juárez without seeing the pink crosses that have been painted on lampposts to represent each of the women murdered. In addition, the grassroots organizations that stemmed from these crimes continue to be highly vocal in the country and even on the international scene.

Considering the staggering total number of cases of missing and murdered women in DTES and Cuidad Juarez, an important and obvious common thread in both settings is the gendered and raced oppression that both cities experience. It is from this stark realization and guided by the preceding review of literature that this thesis project investigates what is particular to the Canadian context to explain the prevalent media narratives and frames that dominate coverage of the missing women's cases.

Chapter 2: Connections Between Theory and Methods

The following pages outline the connection between the features of post-colonial feminist theory and the methodological approach of discourse frame analysis adopted for this research project. Discussion begins with a brief overview of feminist contributions to understanding gender issues in media discourse followed by those of post-colonial theory specifically to the Aboriginal-Canadian social and material contexts. Taken together, these theoretical approaches are mobilized through the research method of discourse frame analysis to guide the reading of the *Vancouver Sun (*2006-2011) coverage of the cases of the missing and murdered women of downtown East Side Vancouver and to identify the prevalent discursive themes or frames to be analyzed.

Feminism

As is discussed in much criminological literature, a formula for a feminist analysis of a research problem does not simply require the researcher to "add women and stir" (Bunch, 1987:140). Beginning in the 1970s, systematic scrutiny of gender bias in academic study revealed that male-dominated perspectives had ruled social-scientific study for some time. Feminist approaches thus look to uncover gender bias in what are taken in the discipline to be established truths (Brooks, 2002B**).** Additionally, feminist theorizing identified patriarchy as "the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general" (Lerner, 1965:3). Systemic male dominance meant not only that women were conceived of as a group to under-value, exploit and oppress but also that women defined themselves largely according to this subordination. Further,

forms of violence against women, including the feminization of poverty and prostitution, can thus be viewed as manifestations of male supremacy.

Clearly, however, it is not enough to focus only on the gender and social class of victims of crime, as most (estimates range between 42-45 of the 70+ women, or approximately 60%) of the women missing and murdered in DTES were Aboriginal (Arthur, Nov 2, 2012) With respect to the Aboriginal victims, race is a significant factor intersecting both with gender and social class that renders them particularly disadvantaged materially and socially within Canadian society. Post-colonial theory, as an extension of post-modernist thought is not focused on locating truths but rather on how forms of knowledge claim to speak the truth and thus exercise power over certain peoples (Locating Law, 2006:63). By deconstructing the ways in which society at large, the law, and the media view women living and working on the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, definitions of "the good versus the bad woman" and concepts of social invisibility and neglect become apparent.

Feminist post-colonial theory therefore acknowledges the differing experiences of prejudice based on race, class, sex and culture (Gaigneur, 1990). To fully situate feminist post-colonial theory as it relates to this thesis research, a brief history of colonialism in Canada and its relation to modern day colonialist ideals follows.

Post-Colonialism in Canada

"Neo-colonialism is...the worst form of imperialism. For those who practice it, it means power without responsibility, and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress" (Nkrumah, 1965, xi).

Canada's tumultuous history in relation to protecting First Nations people and their respective rights is well known and has been researched at length (Native Women's Association, 2009; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs, 2009). This is especially true in relation to First Nations women. Lynn (2008), states that throughout Canadian history Indigenous women have been sexually exploited. In the early days of European arrival, European men demanded sexual access to Indigenous Canadian women. In fact, the first brothels in and around European colonizing posts were filled with Native Canadian women (Lynn, 1998). Chrisjohn (1991) adds that with assimilation strategies such as dislocation and the residential school system beginning in the 20^{h} century (Assembly of First Nations, accessed 02/20/09), First Nations populations were forced to abandon their culture, languages and familial ties while fully subject to European powers. Physical, sexual and psychological abuse was rampant in such schools and is said to have caused irrevocable damage to First Nations peoples.

Jiwani and Young (2006) argue that the closure of Residential schools in the late 20th century did not end Indigenous physical and psychological dislocation. Indeed child welfare systems apprehended children who were suspected victims of abuse whether or not these allegations were founded, and placed them in non-Aboriginal homes. Once in welfare-system care, many children lost all contact with families of origin and home communities causing further subjugation to white cultures and populations.

Professor of Social and Equality Studies at the University of Toronto, Sherene Razack (2002), argues that during this time the socially constructed binary ideal that cast white femininity as in need of protection and non-while femininity as uncivilized and

sexually promiscuous was prevalent. Razack argues that for Aboriginal women this association continues, in their families, communities and most particularly in mainstream, white culture. She points out that persistent poverty and sexual exploitation, combined with racism and the ongoing dislocation of families adds up to a significant number of risk factors for women to become involved in the sex trade (Razack, 1998:65). Once involved, race, gender and class continue to figure into mediated social constructions of these women as sex trade workers whose lives don't matter as much as those of others (Batacharya, 2006).

The post-colonial perspective thus emphasizes the historical intersections of gender, race and class to argue that violence against Aboriginal women cannot be understood except through a lens of the devastation that colonization has wrought Aboriginal peoples (Razack, 1998:64). Benoit et al. (2006) concur by pointing out that the physical and psychological effects of such practices as sexual slavery, the residential school system, and at times unlawful attainment of Native children continues to be felt today by Indigenous Canadians, especially women. For,

> "…there is no disconnection between present-day social life and the past on which it stands The common sense-making practices that lie behind marginality, dominance, and hierarchy figure in all of our individual and collective histories, albeit in markedly different ways (Nelson, 2008:5).

Building on the same theme, Pamela Downe (2006:3) talks of the notion of a "lived history" which requires us to make inter-generational connections between the raced and gendered experiences of Aboriginal girls in residential schools and the inequality and

exploitation that they face today as women. As Downe says, “we are all inheritors of our past”; the past affects how Indigenous women construct their identities today, as well as how others construct their identities for them. Downe (2006:2) continues by stating that “the abuses experiences by Aboriginal girls over the past 130 years are not isolated occurrences; they are connected to a pervasive colonial ideology that sees these young women as exploitable and often dispensable.” Downe (2006) goes on to point out that there are now entire Indigenous communities burdened with a sense of violation and powerlessness, and that these are the direct effects of multiple violations by colonial powers. Bopp et al, (1999: 92), explain that when trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next.

Canada's colonial past therefore lives on in the dismal social and material conditions of Vancouver's DTES in ways that especially shape Aboriginal women's experiences there. A post-colonial feminist perspective therefore emerges as offering the best analytical tools and concepts for examining the media discourse pertaining to the missing women's cases. As a form of feminist philosophy, post-colonial feminist theory argues that racism, colonialism, and the long lasting effects (economic, political, and cultural) of colonialism shape the present gendered realities of non-white, and non-Western women (Weedon, 2002).

Many view the Downtown Eastside as an “Urban Reserve” where the triple forces of race, gender and class place Aboriginal women at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and as the victims of fierce brutality and neglect (Farley, Lynn and Cotton, 2005). It is by the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal girls through prostitution that racism,

sexism and poverty collide as a lived history of colonization (Jiwani et al, 2006). To further set the context for a media analysis of the missing women's cases, the following statistics pertaining to the lingering effects of colonialism for First Nations women are provided:

- Young Aboriginal women holding status are 5 times more likely that women of the same age to die from violence (Indian and Northern Affairs, 1996) .
- 75% of Aboriginal girls18 years of age and under have been sexually abused (Lane et al, 2003).
- 84% of Aboriginal households on reserves do not have sufficient income to cover housing (RCAP, 1996) and it has been well documented that homelessness is a clear risk factor for prostitution (Boyer et al., 1993; Pines & Silbert, 1983).
- Aboriginal girls are two and half times more likely to live in poverty than non-aboriginal girls (UNDP, 2000).
- Aboriginal children and youth forms more than 90 per cent of the visible sex trade in areas where the Aboriginal population is less than 10 per cent. (Kingsley and Mark, 2000:41).
- According to Amnesty International, an Aboriginal woman in Canada is sixteen times more likely to be murdered than a non-Native woman (Amnesty International Report, 2004).

- The area of the Downtown Eastside has a large prevalence of First Nations people: thirty percent of the residents are Indigenous, ten times higher than the national average (Pivot Legal Society, 2005).
- The majority of the more than 65 sex workers allegedly murdered or missing from the Downtown Eastside are of Aboriginal ancestry (Pivot Legal Society, 2005).
- According to the 2006 Statistics Canada Census, 3.8% of the Canadian population identifies as Aboriginal (Statistics Canada, 2007), while estimates range between 42-45 of the 70+ women, or approximately 60%) of the women missing and murdered in DTES were Aboriginal (Arthur, Nov 2, 2012)

Methodology and Methods

While a central objective of this thesis research is therefore to identify and analyze the content of neo or post-colonial discourses in the *Vancouver Sun* (2006-2011) coverage of the missing Aboriginal women from the DTES, the project also considers discourses of gender and class which may pertain to the white victims in ways that may or may not differ from the non-white. Toward these ends, the research method of discourse frame analysis applied to mediated language forms the basis of this study. Broadly speaking, critical discourse analysis (CDA) concerns how social and political inequalities are manifest in and reproduced through discourse" (Wooffitt, 2005:37). Drawn from critical discourse analysis, discourse frame analysis is a method commonly

associated with critical criminology as it works to challenge and uncover pre-existing dominant narratives.

It is important to point out that this research method derives from the post-structural theoretical perspective that denies the existence of grand narratives in favor of viewing discourse meanings as reactions to the existing, dominant ideologies in society. All scholarly works discussed demonstrate how CDA can be successfully implemented as a means to unearth how the powerful in society construct the comparatively powerless and how these seemingly powerless participate in this construction.

Underlying this approach is the ontological perspective that discourse and language make up our social reality and as such are systems of knowledge that define society (Fairclough, 2001:233). Moreover, CDA focuses on the role of discursive activity in contributing and sustaining unequal power relations. Perhaps most notable, says Nelson **(**2008:55) are the effects of the discursive activity on the population that is the object of the discourse. Minimally, discourse analysis of texts allows the researcher to show how language is used to exert an idea that is taken as true and thus legitimate.

According to Wethrell, Taylor, and Yates (2001), CDA is of distinct assistance when studying issues related to social exclusion. There are two studies in particular which help to demonstrate how this method can be used in criminological/sociological research relating to the creation of distance between groups, difference and the creation of the "us" versus "them" dichotomy. Potter and Wetherell (1987) use discourse analysis to show how "…other' ethnicities are constructed to justify racist attitudes…", while van Dijk (1993) demonstrates how a narrative analysis "reveals insight into the construction

of ethnicity and race". Furthermore, Van Dijk asserts that "stories of minorities generally function as complaints by majority members or as expressions of negative experiences or prejudices about minorities (Van Dijk in Phillips and Hardy, 2002:125).

As was mentioned in the literature review, Jiwani and Young (2006) identify news frames or themes in their discourse analysis of *Vancouver Sun* articles on the missing and murdered women from 1999-2006. In summary, their media frame analysis named the following prevalent frames in the newspaper coverage of the cases:

1. An early, albeit mild, focus on police inefficiency as an excuse to why a number of women went missing without the issue becoming an major topic in news reports.
2. A focus on the individual perpetrator as some "isolated deviant" while ignoring the social and political aspects of the case.
3. A continued emphasis on the "house of horrors" with gory details, which effectively took away the dignity and personhood of each woman.
4. A persistent grouping of the women as "Aboriginals" and a reinforcing of stereotypes concerning Canada's First Nations which precluded identifying each woman on an individual basis.

In their research, Jiwani and Young also identify what they describe as a "newshole", referring to the publication ban that was in place concerning the missing and murdered women's cases at the time they completed their project (Jiwani and Young, 2006). They argue that the publication ban created a pathway for more critical coverage of the cases as well as intensified discussion of root social causes of the tragedies of the missing women. This critical coverage can be identified as a counter frame which advocated a position against what was previously presented as dominant truths, thus challenging the dominant frames legitimacy. Emerging during their research, these counter-frames had the potential to be a step in the right direction by challenging readers

to look past the stereotypical and racialized ideologies presented. But this potential was lost as reports attempting to paint these women as the “mothers, sisters, daughters, etc., merely succumbed to a hegemonic ideal of femininity, which further exacerbated the female victims' marginality.

Keeping these ideas in mind, this thesis project proceeds where Jiwani and Young (2006) left off, employing discourse frame analysis to determine whether or not between 2006 and 2011, the themes or frames they identified persisted, were replaced by others, and/or were modified in substantial ways. With respect to how themes or frames are conceptualized, Entman (1993) states:

> "[t]o frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation"(52).

Framing is therefore the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997:221). A counter frame can therefore be seen as dependent on the dominant frame, that is, counter frames are created as a contrast to what is being widely accepted as truth through the framing method.

A comprehensive frame analysis of the *Vancouver Sun's* published news reports dating from 2006 to 2011 forms the basis of this thesis research. To access the news reports, the Factiva database (available at the Killam Library at Dalhousie University) was used, as it was the same database used by Jiwani and Young (2006). The key phrases used to locate relevant articles were “missing women”, “Pickton” and “*Vancouver Sun”*.

In total, 391 articles were located, although this number includes some duplicate publication of news reports, letters to the editor and articles that mentioned the cases of the missing and murdered women only tangentially or in passing.

Each was first read in its entirety for content and context and then read a second time to focus on identifying the frames (and counter-frames) that appear to be the most dominant (as per, Kuypers 1997, Entman 2003 and Gitlin,1980 analysis of news frames). The frames were subsequently contrasted to those identified by Jiwani and Young (2006) and new or original frames were noted. Because of its qualitative nature, the primary goal of the methodology was to analyze any patterns, narratives, and themes that surround talk of the missing women. If we look to what Babbie and Benaquisto (2002) describe as the prime objective of qualitative analysis, namely, "…non numerical examination and interpretation....for the purpose of discovering underlying meaning and patterns of relationships…", it can be stated that the themes developed according to coherent, meaningful categories, i.e. the overarching narratives and ideologies that media discourses project became apparent.

The great challenge of critical discourse analysis is to illustrate the key discourses talked of through "the linear ordering of ideas demanded by language" (Nelson, 2008:55). It is therefore important to emphasize that while counter-discourses from women's groups, Aboriginal rights' groups, family and friends of the missing women, sex trade unions, etc., came to the fore in many instances even before news of the murdered women hit public media outlets, the central focus of the research project was to identify and explore the emergence of *dominant* discourses to the exclusion of the others. In this, the research concludes that the dominant discursive strategies served mostly to

deflect attention away from discourses on systemic and longstanding forms of inequality and allow a distancing of the readership from identification with the women victims.

> That some discourses are dominant....is a function of power. They become `common-sense, taken for granted, axiomatic, traditional, normal` (Bob Carter 2000:28)

It must be acknowledged that this research project only examines the proceedings from the coverage provided by the *Vancouver Sun*. While clearly the printed news source most widely read by the local population in Vancouver, it is only one source among many others, both national and international that covered these tragic incidents.

Lastly, because this research identifies themes defined by the media in reports, I must acknowledge my role in identifying the themes and creating the meanings surrounding them and therefore my role in knowledge production. Some may question how I, as a middle-class woman of European descent, can possibly come close to understanding what these women went through and the challenges they continue to face today. Others may also wonder what relation I have to these women. Certainly, I do not claim to have any complete understanding of what these women experience on a daily basis, nor do I have personal experience with the discriminatory attitudes and policies subjected onto Canadian Aboriginal peoples. What I do know is that we are all Canadian, and although the DTES of Vancouver is far removed from my own experience, it is inseparable from Canadian history. (Nelson, 2008:3)

By choosing research questions and objectives that can be addressed through a media analysis I also put forth my ontological view that discourse and language make up

our social reality and as such are systems of knowledge that define society (Fairclough, 2001:233). Moreover, by employing a critical discourse analysis which focuses on the role of discursive activity in contributing and sustaining unequal power relations, I acknowledge that issues of power and knowledge creation can indeed be uncovered through a media analysis. Through my critical discourse analysis I do not put forth answers to the sociological phenomenon I am addressing but hope to enable more of an understanding into the conditions that bring about such a phenomenon – in my case the root causes of the unequal and at times discriminatory media focus on the case of the missing and murdered women

In summation, I am "the other" in this research, but I will not accept this position as a reason to ignore the topic and my findings. Being the other should not demarcate a researcher from attempting to understand tragedy and inequality. What I also acknowledge and argue is that we must not set the responsibility on those who *we* see as the other to explore and examine the social phenomena that they experience. Empathy and human rights for all must transcend gendered, racial and class boundaries that are too often used to separate us. We must continue to acknowledge our unique identities without allowing them to separate us for compassion.

While this thesis research updates that of Jiwani and Young (2006), it also reveals new aspects of the missing and murdered women's cases apparent in media discourse. For example, since 2006, the trial against Robert Pickton occurred and he was convicted on six counts of second-degree murder (and therefore not guilty on the original six counts of first degree murder) (Matas, 2007). Other later developments in the case included a lifting of the publication ban in 2007, which resulted in a number of detailed descriptions

of the crimes (including graphic representations of how the victims were murdered), and an increase in the number of activist voices on behalf of the victims, including their families and friends, Aboriginal groups, women's groups, and others. Additionally, the post-trial era of the missing women's cases included the failure to proceed with additional murder charges against Pickton, the Pickton Inquiry itself as well as discussion of life in the Downtown Eastside, all of which have been reported on in the Vancouver Sun since 2006 and thus are included in the data analysis, allowing existing narratives to be continued and new narratives to emerge.

Chapter 3: Analysis of Data

This chapter begins with the identification of the prominent frames and counter-frames employed by the *Vancouver Sun* in the 391 articles it produced between 2006 and 2011 in its coverage of the cases of the missing women. With respect to how themes or frames are conceptualized, Entman (1993) states:

> "[t]o frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation"(52).

Framing is therefore the process by which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997:221).

First, the articles were assessed with respect to the frame criteria (method) developed by Jiwani and Young (2006) in their analysis of media reporting prior to 2006, and then they were re-assessed to determine if any new frames emerged in the coverage. Excerpts from the coverage by theme are presented to illustrate and highlight the discourses made dominant by the media-framing process. Only articles that paint the case in a descriptive manner (i.e. to present a position or opinion with regards to the case) were included and reduced the total number to 307. Excerpts detailed herein were chosen to represent the overall sentiments/voices contained in the article.

Jiwani and Young (2006) Frames

As detailed in Chapter 1and 2, Jiwani and Young's (2006) media content analysis named the following prevalent frames in the newspaper coverage of the cases: police inefficiency, a focus on the individual perpetrator as an "isolated deviant" , a continued emphasis on the "house of horrors" with gory details, and a persistent grouping of the women as "Aboriginals" and a reinforcing of stereotypes concerning Canada's First Nations which precluded identifying each woman on an individual basis.

In the analysis of *The Vancouver* Sun from 2006-2011, each of the frames identified above by Jiwani and Young (2006) persisted in the news reports. There were also additional themes mentioned only in passing by Jiwani and Young that developed more fully in Sun coverage from 2006 on. These themes include the rise and development of grassroots organizations, which took up the cause of the missing and murdered women, the development of the human-interest stories involving individual victims and coverage of the public's reactions to the emerging court coverage.

What follows is a chronological listing of the overarching media frames identified from 2006-11, with some indication of the how each frame corresponds (or not) to the findings of Jiwani and Young.

The "Newshole"

Robert Pickton's trial began on January 30, 2006, where he pled not guilty to 27 charges of first-degree murder (CBC News, Jan 30, 2006). The Voir Dire stage of the Trial (a hearing to determine what evidence is admissible to the jury trial) began soon

after and lasted a year. During this stage of the trial it was determined that only 6 counts of First Degree murder would be heard before the jury as the Judge deemed 26 (one had since been dropped for lack of evidence) to be too much for one jury to handle. The information that was heard during the Voir Dire was subject to a publication ban (which was not lifted until 2010 (Skeleton, Aug 10, 2010).

When Yasmin Jiwani and Mary Young ended their data collection in 2006, they predicted that a new media frame might arise. They noted that the Voir Dire hearings would be subject to a publication ban and thus the many, and at times graphic details of the trial, would not be disclosed to the public at the time. It was proposed that this gap in information would create a *newshole,* for what is the media to report on when the sensationalistic bits and pieces revealed in the courtroom cannot be communicated at large (Jiwani & Young 2006:10)? The researchers noted the potential for this newshole to be filled with stories of the missing women, including stories creating personhood and questions that looked broader than a simple-minded killer (i.e. to the structural causes of these crimes against humanity).

Attempted Humanistic Frames

As Jiwani and Young predicted, there was ensuing media coverage that exhibited an effort to create a more humanistic frame. Statements regarding the family and friends of the victims contributed to the recognition of the women victims as people who mattered, as exemplified by the following:

> These women weren't throw-aways. They were human beings. Somebody loves them, every single one of them (Radek in Culbert, November 26, 2007, B1).

> A small group of friends and relatives of women missing from the Downtown Eastside released balloons Sunday into a beautiful sunny sky as they remembered loved ones who vanished years ago (Culbert, November 26, 2007, B1).
>
> Missing women honoured: Family and friends gather for a memorial to show loved ones are gone but not forgotten (Culbert, Nov 26, 2007, B1).

Numerous organizations also collaborated to draw people together and to create awareness of the victims through organized walks, protests, etc., as seen in the following *Sun* excerpts:

> Victims honored in ceremony outside court: Downtown Eastside women perform Lillooet First Nation warrior song (Shore, January 23 2007, C A4).
>
> Hundreds march through the Downtown Eastside to honor the lives of missing women (Canadian Press, 15 February 2006, C B2).
>
> Missing women's resting place marked: Their names were read aloud as roses representing 65 missing women were thrown into the last excavated pit on Robert Pickton's farm before it was filled with dirt (Culbert, December 11 2007, A1).

In attempts to bring recognition to the missing women, many individuals and grassroots organizations used art, music and film:

> Ode to the missing but not forgotten… The grandfather of a missing woman who pig farmer Robert (Willy) Pickton has been accused of murdering hopes a powerful song penned by famed poet Susan Musgrave will raise money to help other troubled women (Culbert, June 5.2006, B1).
>
> An artist works to capture the life experience and emotion behind the photographs of women missing from the Downtown Eastside (Culbert, November 11,2006, B1).
>
> Film goes beyond missing woman's case: Debuting at the 11th annual Amnesty International film festival, NFB documentary examines violence against native women (Griffin, November 2, 2006, D22).

> Combating violence against women: Documentary tells the story of Dawn Crey, one of the 60 women who went missing from the Downtown Eastside (Griffin, March 8, 2007, D18).
>
> Welsh said from New York that she thought it was important to show the film at a UN event because it brings the issues of indigenous women in Canada to an international audience (Griffin, March 8, 2007, D18).

Stories that emphasized individual victim's lives and those that took a deeper look into the victims' histories added a human face to the case. However, much of this coverage also painted the women as "the other" by emphasizing drug use, sex trade work, etc. creating distance designating the women as at risk from the beginning. For example:

> Abotsway, who went by the street name Riviera…..Her young body was covered in scars from repeated intravenous drug use and injuries from her difficult lifestyle (Culbert, December 1, 2007, E6).
>
> Papin "was doing really well" in 1997, living with her children -- the jury has heard she had at least four kids -- in Mission and making native crafts. But by the next year, Papin was working the streets and struggling with a major drug addiction (Culbert, December 1, 2007, E6).
>
> Sereena had been a victim of a number of violent assaults. There were a few times when she came in and she had been beaten up quite badly by a number of different men," Allan said (Culbert, December 1, 2007, E6).
>
> Wilson, who went by the street name Stacey, had a boyfriend who relied on her financially to support his daily drug habit, Allan said (Culbert, December 1, 2007, E6).
>
> [Sereena Abotsway]… volunteered to help others at various Downtown Eastside organizations during her final years on the streets (Culbert, January 13, 2007, A4).
>
> Sereena quite often, when talking to us on the phone, would ask us to make sure that the younger [foster] children would never end up living the life that she was living (Culbert, January 13, 2007, A4).

While news articles during this time period did respond to the newshole by publishing personal histories of the missing and murdered women, the humanistic frame is not considered dominant in that media coverage quickly turned to Pickton in attempts to deconstruct his psyche, his biography and his wrongdoings to present a story of why he did wrong

The "House of Horrors" and "Isolated Deviant" frames

The year 2006 ended with the completion of the Voir Dire hearings, and led to the first day of jury evidence, which began on January 22, 2007 (Culbert, Jan 13, 2007). The start of the jury trial brought journalists from around the world onto New Westminster, British Columbia. It was during this time that the dominant frames once identified by Jiwani and Young (2006) as the "House of Horrors" or "Isolated Deviant" frames began to re-appear. For the first time in the case, the news media was able to hear the specific and at times graphic details of multiple murders and in some cases how each woman may have spent their last moments. Media articles seemed fascinated by the evidence and the spectacle of the trial. The victims profiles and stories lost focus as articles began to describe in detail the horrors that occurred on the Pickton farm.

By the beginning of 2007, three sub-frames had emerged from the larger frames of the "House of Horrors" and "Isolated Deviant"**.** These were i) attempts to delve into the psyche of the killer, ii) continuous discussion of the notoriety of Pickton (including coverage of police interviews in which they told him he would be famous) and iii)

technical descriptions of the crime scene and the vile acts, many sexual in nature, that were inflicted upon the women, and rendered the victims objects rather than victims of heinous crimes.

Portrait of a Killer

Physical descriptions of Pickton were apparent in many *Sun* news stories including his odd demeanor in the courtroom, that he took his own notes and that he showed no remorse. Reports also begin to paint a picture of a maniacal Pickton. Photos of Pickton balding, his long grey hair, and his emotionless visage behind bulletproof glass served to further separate him from the public and to create an image of the isolated deviant.

> “His [Pickton] hair was "a mess," he was unshaven, his hands were dirty, and he had body odor” (Culbert & Hall, February 6, 2007, A2).
>
> "He's [Pickton] got a creepy voice. It's low, he doesn't talk very loud. It's not, like, a deep voice. It's kind of a whiny voice" (Hall & Culbert, January 24, 2007, A1).
>
> “Pickton lived in a messy trailer on a cluttered farm” (Culbert, February 14, 2007).

Pickton was thus characterized as uncivilized, messy and he was described as one of a kind. At that stage of the court proceedings, media reports laid blame on a “psychopath” and diverted attention away from police ineptitude and the social-structural inequalities that put the victims in harm’s way.

History and Upbringing

Discussions of Pickton's history and childhood were brought up in testimony and reported in the *Sun*, all of which provide a psychological profile of a deviant individual. For example:

> Never talked to my dad much," he [Pickton] admits and says they sometimes fought. Pickton never told his father about his only girlfriend. He was closer to his mother, a relationship he describes as "Two peas in a pod." Louise Helen Pickton died of cancer when Pickton was in his late 20s, about two years after his father died. He describes her as "strong" (Shore, January 25, 2007, A4).
>
> [Willie Pickton] quit school at the age of 16 to focus on farming…he didn't do very well academically" (Culbert, February 2, 2007, B1).
>
> Ritchie, who produced Pickton's school records, suggested his client had failed Grade 2 and was put in a "special class" (Culbert, February 1, 2007, B1).
>
> Pickton had a beloved pet horse named Goldie. After it died, Pickton had the horse's head mounted and displayed on the wall of his trailer" (Hall, February 1, 2007, A2.
>
> While the defense has portrayed Pickton in court as the village idiot, the police interrogation team maintained that wasn't true (Hall & Culbert, February 20, 2007, B2).
>
> A 55-minute audio tape dubbed "Bob's Memoirs" was played at Robert (Willie) Pickton's murder trial Wednesday. The tape, which the jury has heard was found on a shelf in his slaughterhouse along with several music cassettes, and reveals a confident, unsophisticated man recalling a childhood of poverty and an adulthood of hard work" (Culbert, March 8, 2007, B1.
>
> A series of letters purportedly penned by Robert (Willie) Pickton, who is accused of killing 26 missing women, maintain his innocence and claim he is just the "fall guy" arrested in the multi-million investigation. Pickton has given no media interviews since his 2002 arrest, and his court proceedings have been muzzled by a publication ban, so any letters written by him would provide the first public glimpse into the thoughts of the man accused of being Canada's worst serial killer (Culbert & Hall, September 2, 2006, A1).

> The letters are laced with biblical overtones, and to date it has never been clear to the public that Pickton could be religious. The phrase my father" in the letters appears to refer to God, as opposed to a biological dad (Culbert & Hall, September 2, 2006, A1).

The Ego Maniacal Frame

During the trial, a video of the RCMP interview with Pickton and the surveillance footage of an undercover police officer in the cell with Pickton following his February 2002 arrest were shown to the jury and onlookers. The *Sun* describes Robert Pickton at this time as “the most successful serial killer in the North American continent.” Thereby feeding the potential for criminal notoriety for Pickton. For example,

> Pickton "could be seen as something of a star in prison ... he's a hero because he's a such big-time serial killer" (Culbert & Hall, January 31, 2007, A1).
>
> The truth is, Willie, you're probably gonna be the largest serial killer in the history of Canada, you're going to be a very, very famous guy," said Insp. Don Adam, the head of the Missing Women's Task Force (Hall, January 26, 2007, A2).
>
> ‘You mean I'm in the paper, too?' Police play on Pickton's ego, telling him his arrest made national headlines "In the paper today? They put me in the paper?" Pickton asked again, his voice rising with excitement (*Vancouver Sun*, no author, January 25, 2007, B2).
>
> I wasn't joking when I said you're, you're as big as the Pope earlier, all right . . . ," Fordy said (Culbert, January 24, 2007, B2).
>
> I'm on top of the world," Pickton said. "... You must have heard about me from the paper. ... The whole f-----g world knows me. All the way to Hong Kong" (Culbert & Hall, February 6, 2007, A1).
>
> Willie, you understand that it's horrible -- but it's impressive. You may well be the most successful serial killer in the North American continent. You know right now whether you are or not, because if you are up over 50 you are. Now, I wouldn't bet against you being over 50," Adam said” (Culbert, January 26, 2007, B2).

> You weren't aware at the time that this was going to be one of the largest DNA searches in Canadian history. You didn't see that coming, did you?" Brooks asked. (Culbert & Hall, February 8, 2007, B1).

These dominant media frames serve only to construct the infamous serial killer persona, and intensifies attention given on the isolated deviant rather than the victims and the losses incurred by their families and friends.

Crime Scene Imagery Frame

From the graphic testimony given during the trial came a frame discussed by many scholars as Crime Scene Imagery (Haltunnen, 1998). There were numerous experts called as witnesses to testify to the horrid conditions of the crime scene. Detailed explanations of forensic and evidentiary findings were put in the open for the jury and all in the Courtroom to attempt to understand and reported by the Vancouver Sun as evidenced in the following excerpts

> The jury in Robert (Willie) Pickton's first-degree murder trial got a lesson Monday in identifying blood, hearing about several possible and confirmed stains found on items on the suspect's Port Coquitlam farm (Culbert, March 27 2007, B7).

> Found on a laundry room shelf was a .22-calibre Smith & Wesson handgun with a dildo attached to the gun barrel. The Crown contends Abotsway was shot with a .22-calibre gun, he [Prosecutor Derrill Prevett] added (Hall, January 23, 2007, A1).

> He said the investigator found two five-gallon plastic pails in the freezer, stacked one on top of the other, each containing a severed head, two hands and two feet (Hall, January 23, 2007, A1).

> A mandible (lower) jawbone with two teeth was found beside the slaughterhouse, which DNA analysis matched to Wolfe (Hall, January 23, 2007, A1).
>
> Let 'em dig. . . play in the dirt," Pickton giggled in an upbeat voice. ". . . teeth, we're gonna find fingernails, bones. Yes, oh, yes it is" (Culbert, February 7, 2007, A1).
>
> He requested the half skull be compared with the remains in the frozen buckets -- which belonged to missing women Andrea Joesbury and Sereena Abotsway -- as well as to a vertically bisected head -- belonging to Mona Wilson -- found in a bucket near Pickton's pigpen (Culbert, February 27, 2007, B7).
>
> A lab technologist [Tanya Dare] testified she was looking for blood when she examined the inside of a freezer -- one right beside a second freezer on Robert (Willie) Pickton's farm that contained the partial remains of two missing women (Culbert, March 28, 2007, B7).
>
> A hook hanging from a chain dangled near the centre of the main butchering room, which also contained a walk-in freezer for pig carcasses. There were three chest freezers as well, each holding several butchered pigs (Culbert & Hall, February 21, 2007, B4).
>
> She [witness Lynn Ellingsen] went to the adjacent slaughterhouse, where Pickton often slaughtered pigs and butchered them. When she opened the barn door, she said, she was shocked to see a woman's body hanging from a chain, with part of the body being cut up on a nearby table (Hall, July 5, 2007, B4).

After much graphic testimony, Pickton's trial ended on Dec 7, 2007. He was subsequently convicted of 6 counts of second-degree murder (the Crown wanted first degree murder) and sentenced to 6 consecutive life sentences of 25 years to be served concurrently with no eligibility of parole for a maximum of 25 years.

Re-emergence of Police Inefficiency

The frame of police inefficiency discussed by Jiwani and Young (2006) made another minor appearance during the trial period of 2007. It was presented in a

documentary style, emphasizing how the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) went about their investigations. There was little critique or comment and for the most part, readers were left to pick out the discrepancies. For example:

> Mountie tells how stalled investigation was renewed: For a time, they believed the disappearances had ended (Culbert, January 23, 2007, A5).
>
> The Vancouver file was complicated, Adam said, because police needed to prove the women hadn't merely moved away, and because there was such a large pool of potential suspects (Culbert, January 23, 2007, A5).
>
> Adam said his task force identified a number of systemic problems facing the Vancouver Police in its investigation prior to 2001: the lack of a missing person's DNA databank in B.C., no way to compare the DNA of missing women to the 130 unidentified remains at the coroner's service, and old DNA of suspects in similar cases never being analyzed (Culbert, January 23, 2007, A5).
>
> The group was trying to review the 1,300 tips collected by Vancouver Police but the work was slow and the computer system being used by the VPD was in "such disarray and so ill-supported" that it did nothing for the RCMP except "waste our time" (Culbert, January 23, 2007, A5).
>
> Since no one on the task force had any experience chasing serial killers, members traveled to Washington State to compare notes with two police departments investigating the murders of prostitutes in Spokane and Seattle, Adam said. (Culbert, January 23, 2007, A5).
>
> Critique of police conduct promised (Culbert, Dec 11, 2007, A4).
>
> Relatives of Robert (Willie) Pickton's victims have long accused police of making mistakes in the missing women cases, and those accusations will be addressed after Pickton's second trial, the former lead investigator promised (Culbert, December 11, 2007, A4).

While the above excerpts demonstrate that some media coverage of police ineptitude in the *Sun* occurred during the trial in 2007, it wasn't until 2010 that more

scathing coverage of Police activities occurred, which will be discussed later.

Conclusive Frame

Once the trial was over and Pickton had appealed the decision (the Crown also appealed for a new trial arguing that Pickton should have been tried on the 26 counts of murder rather than 6), a conclusive media frame entered the Vancouver Sun reports beginning in 2008, based on the portrayal of the end of the tragedy. While the *Sun* coverage of the cases of the missing and murdered women significantly decreased, a new frame emerged that emphasized significant societal issues such as the living conditions in the DTES and that all the victims were women. The following excerpts illustrate the debate that surfaced between those who thought that things had changed because Pickton was no longer on the street and others who argued that he was only a symptom of a much larger, systemic problem.

> Nothing's changed. It's gotten worse and worse and worse" (Culbert, Feb 28, 2008, B1).
>
> Police said since Willie Pickton was arrested, there was no more women missing [from Vancouver]," Williams said. "That's not true" (Culbert, Feb 28, 2008, B1).
>
> The neighbourhood, he [Dave Dickson] said, is "as bad as ever" today, with predators seeking out vulnerable women who need to turn more tricks to feed insatiable habits (Culbert, Feb 28, 2008, B3).

Emergence of Counter Frames

With Pickton in jail, media reporting tapered off, and 2009 was a year of transition toward counter-frames in the Sun. Similar to those appearing prior to 2006, the

counter-frames took the form of an increase in coverage of grassroots organizations, testimony (interviews) with families and friends of the missing women and questions of the macro events that placed these women in harm's way. This timeframe also shows an arrival of the "experienced women" frame, where women (through interviews with the women sex trade workers themselves or those working in drop-in centers in the DTES area) were presented discussing their familiarity with violence and the reader is provided a look into a day in the life of the typical female victim. For example:

> Trisha Baptie's life story reads like the template of many who end up in Vancouver's sex trade -- addiction, foster care, sexual abuse and the eventual slide from the higher end hooker strolls into the Downtown Eastside. Now 35, Baptie is one of the fiercest, most articulate and credible voices calling for abolition of prostitution and sex slavery (Bramham, May 30, 2009, A3.)
>
> If you ask most prostituted women, we can tell you that men know we do not want to be there …usually, the very first thing men make us say is, "Tell me how much you like it" (Bramham, May 30, 2009, A3).
>
> Under any other circumstances it would have been rape, would have been sexual assault with a weapon. But because of the money, none of that was the case (Bramham, May 30, 2009, A3).
>
> Do we, as a society, want men to be able to purchase sexual access to a woman's body?" (Bramham, May 30, 2009, A3).

Grassroots Organizations

Paired with these frames of accessed voices, where stories that highlighted the work of grassroots organizations and brought attention to the missing women's cases and to others who experience violence in their day-to-day lives with a focus on sex trade work.

> 'Our women are not for sale'; Relentless advocate is one of many voices calling for end to prostitution (Bramham, May 30, 2009, A3).
>
> The intent of the "Buying Sex Is Not A Sport" campaign is to interfere with the sex trade and put the focus on the men who buy sex (Bramham, May 30, 2009, A3).
>
> Walk4Justice founders keep hope alive for missing loved ones; Women from northern B.C. are pushing for a public inquiry into the unsolved disappearances and slayings along the Highway of Tears (Culbert, Dec 12, 2009, C5).

Police Inefficiency takes Centre Stage

The year 2010 brought the continuance of the appeal process for Pickton to see if he would be tried for the other 20 charges not included in the first trial. The *Sun's* detailing of police inefficiency intensified after Pickton was granted a stay of charges in August 2010 (meaning he would not be prosecuted on the additional 20 charges). Now, media coverage increasingly focused on the question of why the police did not prevent such a tragedy from happening. The police inefficiency frame that was prominent in Jiwani and Young's (2006) research for the year 2002 and even earlier in Pitman's work in the later 1990's, emerged once again but was now much more intense with frequent evidentiary examples from the cases were brought forth frequently as confirmation of police wrongdoing.

> Serial killer evidence ignored, 13 more women went missing (Kines & Leyne, August 20, 2010, A1).
>
> Because of jurisdictional battles, bad management, and shoddy analysis of the information, police turned their backs on Pickton, while he continued to take women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and murder them on his Port Coquitlam farm (Kines & Leyne, August 20, 2010, A1).

Pickton was allowed to have a friend present, the interview wasn't properly planned or executed, and police failed to follow up on Pickton's consent to let them search his property (Kines & Leyne, August 20, 2010, A1).

He said investigators could have used one of the informants as a police agent; followed up on Pickton's offer to let them search his property; and continued to press the woman who denied seeing a body, but who eventually became a key Crown witness at Pickton's trial. They could also have continued to look for other witnesses, and re-interviewed Pickton using a trained interrogator (Kines & Leyne, August 20, 2010, A1).

While the report provides a disturbing look at a failed investigation, it also highlights the problems with B.C.'s chaotic policing systems. The Vancouver Police and the RCMP should have joined forces early in the investigation to ensure the free flow of information and dedicate more resources to such a complicated case, the report said (Kines & Leyne, August 20, 2010, A1).

Government to order review of Pickton case; Probe follows release of scathing Vancouver Police report 'pointing fingers' at RCMP for failing to catch serial murderer sooner (Bolan, Aug 21, 2010, A13).

Jurisdictional mishmash hindering B.C. police forces (Kines, Derosa, & Knox, Sept 22, 2010, A2).

Police force faces criticism for failing to protect women; Victims not believed, residents treated as 'garbage,' chief told (Hall, Oct 9, 2010, A4).

There are media reports now calling the "Pickton investigation" the worst police investigation in history (Adam, Nov 27, 2010, C1).

B.C. police slow to learn from previous murder probes, Pickton case shows (Kines, Derose, & Knox, Sept 24, 2010, A1)

The investigation was also hampered by infighting, computer problems and inadequate training, police sources told *The Sun* at the time (Kines, August 18, 2010, A1).

Alternatives for Protection

In August of 2010, a full inquiry was launched to consider why these cases of

femicide occurred under the watchful eye of the RCMP and why Pickton was not caught sooner (once the publication ban was lifted, copious quantities of evidence that Police obtained in the earlier investigations were made public). In addition to the frame of police inefficiency, the Sun now transitioned to reporting on the discussions and proposals of what should be done to stop the continued murder of women in the DTES. Alternatives were put forth in an effort to reduce violence against women. For example:

> The recommendations include a national strategy to make it easier to file missing persons reports; improving police communications with victims' families; better understanding the cultural barriers in cases involving native women; increased monitoring of sex offenders; giving police adequate resources to deal with historical files; and expanding national data bases, in particular one for missing persons (Culbert, October 16, 2010, B1.
>
> Feds to spend $10 million to help missing women; Money first announced in March will go to police, community groups (Culbert, Oct 30, 2010, A21).
>
> Eight years after the arrest of serial killer Robert Pickton for preying on vulnerable Downtown Eastside sex-trade workers, the federal government has announced $10 million in initiatives to address the high numbers of missing and murdered aboriginal women (Culbert, October 30, 2010, A21).
>
> $4 million to help police establish a National Police Support Centre for Missing Persons; enhance the Canadian Police Information Centre database to better capture missing-persons data; create a national registry for missing persons and unidentified human remains; and start a website where people can log tips (Culbert, October 30, 2010, A21).
>
> $ 2.15 million for the Department of Justice's Victims Fund to develop victim services for aboriginal people and to assist victims' families (Culbert, October 30, 2010, A21).
>
> $1 million for school-and community-based pilot projects to reduce the vulnerability of young aboriginal women to violence (Culbert, October 30, 2010, A21).
>
> We do, however, need a public inquiry into why these murders occurred, why such killings continue to occur and what if anything we can do to improve our

> social safety net and law-enforcement procedures to lower the risk of such slayings (Mulgrew, August 25, 2010, A4).
>
> Still, some people think we have heard all that before, that LePard has told us all we need to know, that we understand what went wrong and that we have fixed it with some signs along Highway 16 saying don't hitchhike (Mulgrew, August 25, 2010, A4).

Mention of Root Causes

During discussions of ways to decrease crime in the DTES, several *Vancouver Sun* journalists questioned why women are put in a position that makes them susceptible to violence in the first place, thus pointing to systemic racism and classism:

> We need a public process to hear from the families of the women whose killers will never face trial; from people whose loved ones have simply vanished into this black vortex; from police who investigate such crimes; from those who handle the aftermath; from those who care for the mentally ill and the addicted; from those who deal with abused children who become victims ... (Mulgrew, August 25, 2010, A4).
>
> We need an inquiry into why far, far too many of them, such as Guno, come from First Nations (Mulgrew, August 7, 2010, A15).
>
> We do not need an inquiry into Pickton's crimes. We need an inquiry into why we didn't care -- into why we don't care (Mulgrew, August 7, 2010, A15).
>
> We need an inquiry because the list of missing women continues to grow (Mulgrew, August 7, 2010, A15).
>
> A society that simply doesn't care enough; Pickton was able to prey on these women precisely because they wouldn't be missed (Mulgrew, Aug 7, 2010, A15).
>
> The response by police wasn't simply sluggish or glacial, it was non-existent (Mulgrew, Aug 7, 2010, A15).

> This is not a case of misconduct by one or even a handful of officers, this is about institutional indifference and collective failure (Mulgrew, Aug 7, 2010, A15).
>
> Politicians, police and the media were asleep at the switch when relatives began asking questions about the missing women years ago; let's not doze off again when we're this close to finally giving them some answers (Kines, August 11, 2010, A11).

While some *Sun* coverage naming the systemic inequalities that lead to violence against women suggested a potential for historical links to explain why a disproportionate number of Aboriginal women fell victim to these crimes, the identification of root causes was not a dominant media frame in this analysis. Seeds were sown to identify and address racism and sexism endemic to areas like the DTES but it remains to be seen whether or not it will dominate future coverage.

Grassroots, Activism, Familial Ties

The year 2010 brought some coverage in the *Sun* regarding activism and re-emergence on the part of grass-roots movements and families, friends and organizations, as can be seen from the following excerpts:

> Family, friends to share tragic stories about missing women; Public forums in Vancouver, Prince George to precede inquiry (Culbert Nov 3, 2010, A4)
>
> Relatives and friends of missing and murdered women in B.C. will be able to speak out about the tragic cases before a newly struck inquiry begins next year (Culbert Nov 3, 2010, A4).

> Don't let them turn their backs again; By dismissing calls for a public inquiry into the Pickton case, politicians and media do justice a disservice (Kines, August 11, 2010, A11)
>
> Marchers pay tribute to murdered, missing women (Ward, Feb 15, 2010, B2).
>
> The procession, which organizers said was perhaps the largest of the 19 annual marches, halted at many hotels and places where missing women were last seen or murdered (Ward, Feb 15, 2010, B2).
>
> Missing women portraits unveiled; MOA is their home (Culbert, Jan 29, 2010, A4)
>
> Sixty-nine massive portraits of women missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside will be hung in the Museum of Anthropology next year. By artist, Pamela Masik, the series titled The Forgotten. (Culbert, Jan 29, 2010, A4)
>
> Protesters demand inquiry into missing aboriginal women:We've asked . . . but there is no answer,' activist says (Crawford, Jan 4, 2010, A7).
>
> More than 100 women rallied in Crab Park in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Sunday to demand the federal government listen to their plea for a public inquiry into the more than 500 missing and murdered aboriginal women cases across Canada (Crawford, January 4, 2010, A7).
>
> The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2008 also voiced concern about hundreds of unsolved cases of missing aboriginal women in Canada (Crawford, January 4, 2010, A7).

Although noteworthy, when compared to the dominant frame of the time, namely police mishandling of the cases and attempts to lay blame on them for failing to protect the women in the first place, frames of activism and identification of the social-structural causes of the violence were secondary.

Managing the *Issue*

Emerging in 2011 was coverage of efforts to manage the Downtown Eastside of

Vancouver. Much of this focused on developing public policy that would take Aboriginal women and sex trade workers into consideration:

> Increased awareness of sexual exploitation, more available prevention services, better housing options and more support for sex workers are among the priorities suggested in a report going to city council next week on dealing with the city's sex trade (Medha, September 16, 2011, A9).
>
> Safety for First Nations' women top priority; Premiers, aboriginal leaders commit to ending violence and educating youth (Sherlock, July 21, 2011, A5).
>
> Amber Alert system needed along Highway of Tears, commission told (Hall, September 14, 2011, A2)
>
> Chief Counsellor Don Roberts of Kitsumkalum said he believes all the girls and women reported missing have been murdered. He suggested more cameras should be installed along the highway to catch the "monster," who seems to act when people drop their guard (Hall, September 14, 2011, A2).

By comparison, however, the dominant frame in 2011 was coverage of the Inquiry into the police handling of the case.

The Missing Women Inquiry

Although announced in Fall 2010, The Missing Women Commission of Inquiry dominated news reports during the Inquiry in 2011. The goal of the Inquiry was to understand what went wrong with the investigation and how Pickton could get away with his crimes for so long. From the very beginning, the Inquiry was framed by the *Sun* as unfair, because not all parties believed to have a stake in the Inquiry were being heard:

> The protest, which could be heard in the inquiry room eight floors above,

> characterized the inquiry as a "sham" after 18 groups dropped out because the provincial government refused to grant funding for legal counsel (Hall, October 12, 2011, A5).
>
> The government decided to fund only the victims' families, who have two lawyers, compared with 14 for the police and government (Hall, October 12, 2011, A5).
>
> "The failure to fund counsel for aboriginal, sex worker and frontline women's organizations essentially shuts these groups out of the inquiry," EVA BC executive director Tracy Porteous said in a statement (Hall, August 10, 2011, A5).
>
> "From the beginning we had worries about the terms of reference. It's too legal, too much like a trial. That is not the best way to engage with vulnerable women, in a trial-like setting," Pivot lawyer Doug King said Tuesday. (Pemberton, September 21, 2011, A3).
>
> "Any time that people who are key to the process withdraw their participation, that diminishes the strength of the inquiry," said Neil Boyd of the criminology program at Simon Fraser University. (Hall, August 10, 2011, A5).
>
> Kasari Govender of West Coast LEAF said: "Contrary to Premier Clarke's recent statements on the importance of aboriginal women's safety, the government's decision on funding indicates that they don't take seriously the safety of aboriginal women, sex workers and women living in poverty (Hall, August 10, 2011, A5).

Media reports from the Vancouver Sun further emphasized the unfairness of the inquiry by reporting on the various grassroots organizations that refused to participate in the Inquiry because of its unjust parameters:

> Amnesty International adds to growing boycott list (Hall, October 7, 2011, A5)
>
> More groups bowing out of Pickton probe a blow to commission, criminologist says; Another two withdraw after being 'deeply disappointed' by government refusal to provide funding (Hall, 10 August 2011, A5).
>
> "We will not participate in an inquiry that will not listen to the voices of those who were closest to the missing and murdered women and their communities" (Hall, August 10, 2011, A5).

> Groups withdraw after province refuses to fund legal expenses (Bellett July 29, 2011, A3).
>
> "One of the main goals of the inquiry is to learn from the circumstances surrounding the women who vanished from the Downtown Eastside and to prevent it from happening again," their letter said (Bellett July 29, 2011, A3).
>
> Pivot Legal Society drops out of Missing Women inquiry; Launches study to see whether police investigations have improved (Pemberton September 21, 2011, A3)

In the midst of the Missing Women's Inquiry, and most likely the result of the many criticisms levied at it, there was a re-appearance in the *Sun* of victim coverage, at times drawn from the Inquiry itself. Personal stories of the women victims as well as stories illustrating discriminatory attitudes and actions inflicted upon Aboriginal women and women working in the sex trade more generally appeared. Talk of the identities of the women victims, their family histories and the general turmoil they encountered in their lives were discussed and linked to forms of systemic inequality:

> Missing Women Inquiry begins hearing stories of abuse, unsolved crimes (Hall, September 13, 2011, A2)
>
> The Missing Women Inquiry's first community forum in northern B.C. heard some heart-wrenching stories Monday in Prince Rupert. (Hall, September 13, 2011, A2).
>
> One woman described being raped at gunpoint by an RCMP officer, who was never charged (Hall, September 13, 2011, A2).
>
> I want you to know that this has been going on for a long time," she told the forum, the first in a series looking into the systemic problems of police investigating multiple homicides in a number of jurisdictions (Hall, September 13, 2011, A2).
>
> Most sex trade workers have suffered physical, sexual violence: researcher (Neal Hall, October 18, 2011, A7)

> The majority of female sex trade workers on the street in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside suffer from assault, rape and even being thrown from cars, an expert witness told the Missing Women Inquiry Monday. She found that 57 per cent of the women reported suffering physical and sexual violence during an 18-month period. Thirty per cent reported being beaten, 25 per cent reported being raped and 20 recalled being thrown out of a car (Hall, October 18, 2011, A7).
>
> Sex predators would pick up on this "discourse of disposal" in the media to justify the violence they perpetrated on street-level prostitutes, he said. "It gave them tacit approval," Lowman told inquiry Commissioner Wally Oppal. (Hall, October 18, 2011, A7).

Police (in)action was again documented but this time framed within the Inquiry proceedings which seemed to present a sympathetic view of the missing and murdered women:

> Lawyer for murder victims' families blasts police: The Vancouver Police Department and the RCMP completely botched the handling of the investigation into Robert Pickton (Hall, October 12, 2011, A5).
>
> They [the families of Pickton's victims] believe that the authorities are culpable in the deaths of over a dozen women because the authorities enabled Pickton to literally get away with murder for five more years," Ward said. (Hall, October 12, 2011, A5)
>
> Our clients believe the VPD, the RCMP and the Criminal Justice Branch have the blood of their loved ones on their hands," he said (Hall, October 12, 2011, A5).
>
> Ward said the VPD, and later the RCMP, treated the missing women cases with indifference and incompetence by failing to assign adequate resources (Hall, October 12, 2011, A5).
>
> Police "couldn't have cared less what happened to these women," Ward said (Hall, October 12, 2011 A5).
>
> Spectators cheer suggestion of police cover-up on Pickton (Hall, 25 October 25, 2011, A2)

> Relative slams police for failing to investigate report of missing woman; VPD told her to 'leave us alone and let us do our job,' she says (Hall, October 26 2011, A3).
>
> A woman whose sister-in-law disappeared in 1997 slammed police Tuesday for failing to properly investigate (Hall, October 26, 2011, A3).
>
> 'Police have some accounting to do,' brother of slain woman testifies (Hall, 27 October 27, 2011, A7).
>
> Officer lied about whereabouts of sex worker, witness says; Response called indicative of indifferent attitude shown by police (Hall, November 2, 2011, A8)
>
> Casual response to …disappearance was indicative of the indifferent attitude police had toward the dozens of women who went missing (Hall, November 2, 2011, A8)
>
> Police conduct aided a serial killer - they must be held responsible (Mulgrew, September 6, 2011, A4)
>
> And it still hasn't sunk in that police conduct aided him - not only that investigators made mistakes, but their incompetence was so huge it abetted the killings (Mulgrew, September 6, 2011, A4).
>
> There are people who didn't do their jobs here and women died; people who are as responsible for the deaths as Pickton (Mulgrew, September 6, 2011, A4).
>
> It appears there was an appalling lack of resources," the lawyer suggested, accusing the VPD of being indifferent because the missing women were drug addicts and prostitutes, with a large proportion being First Nations women (Hall, November 19, 2011, A7).

With data analysis for this research project concluding at the end ending of 2011, the final report of the Inquiry is yet to be seen. Once it is made public, it will be interesting to contrast the balance of content between the frames of women as repeated victims versus that of legal-criminal justice that merely highlights the legal specificities of the investigation and trial.

Overarching Frames: Aboriginality, the Deviant Woman and Our Reactions

The preceding pages were devoted to a chronological rendering of the *Sun* coverage of the missing and murdered women's cases. Media frames, however, do not often follow a distinct sequential chronological path as many frames are intertwined in various reports. Indeed, some frames permeate the majority of news coverage on the subject. For example, *Sun* coverage usually included mention of Aboriginality, the sex trade and drug addiction together in a way that often implies *worthy* versus *unworthy* victim distinctions. Also, coverage was usually addressed to the mainly middle-class, non-Aboriginal reader, in a way that elicits sympathy and to seems to assure the reader that they are comparatively safe from these scourges. The following discussion engages in an identification and analysis of these overarching frames with selected excerpts to set the stage for the concluding discussion chapter.

In the corpus of media coverage from the *Sun* (2006-11), Aboriginal femaleness as associated with sex trade work was an overarching frame. In essence, Pickton's crimes were painted as an "Aboriginal female problem:"

> Canadian society failed to give the disappearance of native women in Vancouver the same attention given to the murder of 14 women at Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique in 1989 (Ward, February 15, 2007, B1).
>
> The aboriginal population is vastly overrepresented - so while only two per cent of Vancouver's population is involved in street sex work, 40 per cent of sex workers are aboriginal. The Pickton murders included an overrepresentation of aboriginal women, many of whom were involved in sex work (Medha, September 16, 2011, A9).

Whereas the fact that the majority of the missing women were First Nations had

been ignored for years, the personal stories of women victims covered by the *Sun* continued to emphasize the women's First Nations heritage (as an overarching frame):

> Mourners remembered [Georgia] Papin as a loving mother, a good guitar player and someone who celebrated her native heritage. (Culbert, September 22, 2010, A2).
>
> She [Carol Keewatin] is the matriarch of three generations of Keewatin women and girls whose lives have been thrown into turmoil by drugs. Carol Keewatin, 55, is in a drug treatment centre after fighting an on-and-off drug addiction for 40 years (Culbert, February 28, 2008, B3).
>
> What the future holds for the next generation of Keewatin girls is unclear, especially if they're drawn to the neighbourhood where their elders have become ensnared (Culbert, February 28, 2008, B3).
>
> Director Christine Welsh takes Dawn's story as a starting point for a journey into the native women who have gone missing or been murdered in Western Canada in communities such as Saskatoon or along Highway 16, the Yellowhead in northern B.C. She interviews the relatives and friends who not only talk about never forgetting those who have been murdered, but of changing attitudes that treat native women as marginalized and disposable (Griffin, March 8, 2007, D18).

While coverage of the many challenges faced by individual aboriginal women may invite the reader to consider the role of colonial history in creating and maintaining forms of social inequality, other coverage by the *Sun*, at times within the context of the Inquiry is far more blunt. For example:

> There has been a pattern of systemic discrimination against First Nations people in B.C. and across Canada for decades, a prominent native leader told the missing women inquiry Wednesday. John said this is part of the systemic discrimination that resulted in the residential school system, which took native children out of their homes in order to "kill the Indian in the child" as part of the government's assimilation policy (Hall, October 13, 2011, A7).
>
> The government tried to undermine the ancient matriarchal society of First Nations people by demeaning and degrading First Nations women, he said. "They

> needed to break our structure down to undermine the authority of our women," John told the second day of the public inquiry (Hall, October 13, 2011, A7).
>
> John said there has been a deep distrust of police for years among First Nations people, adding that in his native language, the word for police is "those who take us" (Hall, October 13, 2011, A7).
>
> Finding Dawn is more about the living than the dead and how native women are organizing to combat violence against native women. Going way beyond media stereotypes of native women as victims, it presents the real stories of native women who are actively engaged in making changes on and off reserve (Griffin, March 8, 2007, D18).
>
> Healing to move on; Native women and youth learn life skills and carving to remember the missing women (Rolfsen, August 9, 2007, B3)
>
> The stories of the missing women are intrinsically tied up with the plight of urban aboriginals. Of the 65 women on the list of those vanished from Vancouver's streets, 23 are indigenous (Rolfsen, August 9, 2007, B3).

Framing of Aboriginal victimization was also prominent in coverage. These narratives firmly placed the women in a passive victim role:

> Fontaine said aboriginal women "were forced onto the streets of Vancouver by grinding poverty that causes so much pain and suffering for our people" (Ward, February 15, 2007, B1).
>
> Protesters demand inquiry into missing aboriginal women; 'We've asked . . . but there is no answer,' activist says (Crawford, January 4, 2010, A7)
>
> She [Angel Wolfe, daughter of one of the victim's] said police ignored the problem for two decades of the missing women such as her mother [Brenda Wolfe], who disappeared in 1999. The same has happened across Canada as police continue to ignore other missing First Nations women, which she called "genocide" (Hall, October 28, 2011, A8).

Items, ceremonies and traditions linked to Aboriginal culture were often also

embedded in particular coverage and served to further emphasize racialized factors in the missing women's cases:

> Just minutes before a verdict was announced, relatives of the native victims invited non-native families to a healing ceremony outside the courthouse (Culbert, December 10, 2007, A3).
>
> The Missing Women's Commission of Inquiry began its first public forum Wednesday with a First Nations' prayer and songs to bless and welcome about 200 people (Hall January 20, 2011, A4).
>
> [Georgia] Papin "was doing really well" in 1997, living with her children -- the jury has heard she had at least four kids -- in Mission and making native crafts. But by the next year, Papin was working the streets and struggling with a major drug addiction (Culbert, Decmeber 1, 2007, E6).
>
> Many women shivered in the cold as they held hands in a circle around the memorial as a somber native drumbeat cut through the silence (Crawford, January 4, 2010, A7).
>
> Some elders and family members dressed in traditional First Nations attire, beat drums and sang native hymns as they marched. They stopped along the way to lay long-stemmed roses and to perform a cleansing ceremony (Canadian Press, February 15, 2006, B2).
>
> Victims honoured in ceremony outside court: Downtown Eastside women perform Lillooet First Nation warrior song (Shore, January 23, 2007, A4)

Fixing Aboriginality so firmly to the missing and murdered women's cases without causal explanation as to why a disproportionate number of Aboriginal women fell victim to this tragic end does little to inform the reader of the longstanding and systemic inequality that underscores these cases. Arguably, what it does accomplish is a further distancing of this violence from *us* (the non-Aboriginal). Further, the overarching frame that associates Aboriginal femaleness with the sex trade and drug addiction contributes to even more distancing and in a way that makes the tragedies less grievable.

For example:

> Metro Vancouver homicide investigators suspect a man charged Monday with killing two drug-addicted sex trade workers may be a serial killer who has preyed on other victims (Bolan, January 8, 2008, A1.
>
> After driving from Vancouver to Pickton's Port Coquitlam farm, she [Monique Wood] injected heroin in the bathroom of his dirty trailer and joined Pickton on his bed (Culbert, Dec 1, 2007, E5).
>
> Through the drug-riddled part of town where women began disappearing in the 1980s…. (Canadian Press, 15 February 2006, B2)
>
> The Missing Women's Task Force has identified 65 women, many of them drug-addicted prostitutes, who have vanished from Metro Vancouver streets over the years (Bolan, January 8, 2008, A1).
>
> Heroin user went to Pickton's home, was given money; She [Monique Wood] left his home the next day and didn't see him again, trial told (Culbert, June 1, 2007, B1.
>
> Cocaine user denies she [Lynn Ellingsen] hallucinated; Woman maintains she saw Pickton with hanging body (Culbert, June 27 2007, B1)
>
> They called me a junkie, a transient and a hooker. She doesn't know anything. She [Cee Jai Julian] doesn't even know what day it is (Kines & Leyne, August 20, 2010, B1).
>
> [Marnie] Frey had been living on East Hastings working as a sex-trade worker and using the street name Kit. Her stepmother believed she was a "very hard-core heroin addict" and possibly HIV-positive (Culbert, Dec 1, 2007, E6).

A concerted effort was made by the *Sun* to report on the ongoing discrediting of testimonies and stories told by women witnesses:

> While she [Lynn Ellingsen] admitted her memory of dates is poor because of drug use, she insisted she was not hallucinating when she was in the slaughterhouse with Pickton (Culbert, June 28, 2007, B1).

> If a prostitute did file a report, she was often seen as untrustworthy -- recall the Crown's decision not to proceed with a 1997 case against Robert "Willie" Pickton because they feared the complainant would not make a credible witness (Mcknight, Aug 14, 2010, C5).
>
> It was her [Lynn Ellingsen's] second day under cross-examination by Brooks, who has challenged her credibility on multiple fronts -- including some contradictions in the 16 statements she gave to police and during her testimony at Pickton's preliminary hearing in 2003 and at his trial this week (Culbert, June 28, 2007, B1).
>
> The defense in its closing arguments had trashed their credibility [Prosecution witnesses], dismissing them as drug addicts, liars and "conmen" who could not be trusted (Culbert, November 24, 2007, B1).
>
> Brooks used the witness's drug addiction and checkered past to challenge her [Lynn Ellingsen's] credibility and reliability (Culbert, June 29 2007, B7).
>
> [Lynn] Ellingsen often appeared upset or embarrassed by some of Brooks' questions, but she regularly asked for time to think about her answers and struggled to remain composed in court (Culbert, June 28, 2007, B1).

Other media frames emphasized the risks taken by those who work in the sex trade, as if blaming the victim for the crimes perpetrated against her. Arguably, this approach again only serves to reassure the reader that these atrocities only happen to those who choose to put themselves in harm's way:

> The victims' lifestyles led to their demise," he [RCMP Cpl. Dale Carr, Homicide Investigator] said (Bolan, January 8, 2008, A1).
>
> Vancouver streets may be no safer for sex-trade workers today, as their occupation continues to be a "risky, risky activity". However, he [Sgt. Ron Fairweather] insists all missing-persons reports received by his office are followed up immediately (Culbert, Feb 26, 2008, B1.
>
> The Vancouver Police Department's decision to not issue a public warning in 1998 that a serial killer may have been preying on Downtown Eastside prostitutes likely wouldn't have changed the behaviour of the women who were killed, the

> Missing Women Inquiry was told Monday (Hall, November 8, 2011, A3).
>
> Improve the investigations into serial killers who target people with "a high-risk lifestyle" (Culbert, Oct 16, 2010, B1)

Predictably, the family and friends of the women victims responded to these frames with counter-images of the lost mother, the daughter, the sister (touched on by Jiwani and Young, 2006) in an effort to make the reader understand that these women were also and possibly foremost, examples of idealized femininity; the beloved mother, sister, daughter:

> [T]hese are our sisters, our daughters, our mothers -- all human beings, all great people. They came into this world with big bright eyes and a slap on the ass, and ready to take the world on. And through whatever reasons they got hooked on the drugs" (Culbert, January 13, 2007, A4).
>
> They were mothers, they were daughters. They were cherished friends." (Bolan, January 8, 2008, A1)
>
> But let us not think of "charges." Let us think instead of six dead women: daughters, mothers, sisters, aunts, lovers (Graham, December 1, 2007, A4).
>
> It is my hope that you will not leave it. That is because of six dead women -- daughters, mothers, sisters, aunts, lovers -- and their grief-stricken families. Because of the police and prosecutors who worked so hard to give them justice. Because as a society we took far too long to care about dozens and dozens of women missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and what remains to us today to honour their memories is the criminal justice system (Graham, December 1, 2007, A4).
>
> Their efforts are evidence that this story is not about lurid headlines or graphic content. It is about daughters, mothers, sisters, aunts and lovers (Mulgrew, August 7, 2010, A4).
>
> We need an examination of why so many of our mothers, sisters and daughters, why so many, many women end up on the meanest streets across this country and easy prey for monsters (Mulgrew, August 7, 2010, A15).
>
> The police didn't value the "lives of our sisters," said Fontaine (Ward, February 15, 2007, B1).

> Several people spoke at the memorial and the theme repeated over and over was to remember the missing women for the daughters, sisters and mothers they were (Culbert, November 26, 2007, B1).
>
> There are still 32 families who don't have the answers to where their daughters are, their mothers are, their sisters are," said native advocate Marlene George. (Culbert, September 22, 2010, A2).
>
> Words like "mother" and "daughter" are subtly woven into the texture of some of the portraits, while others will have collages of newspaper clippings underneath the paint or symbols from native bands within the artwork, to illustrate something personal about each woman (Culbert, November 11, 2006, B1).
>
> Thistle is taking part in the project to remind the public that the women on the poster are "someone's sister, mother, daughter" (Rolfsen, August 9, 2007, B3).
>
> Referring to a *Vancouver Sun* story on the weekend, she [Cee Jay Julian] noted that the women left behind 75 children. She said the missing women "won't witness their [children's] graduations or marriages" (Culbert & Hall, January 31, 2006, A1).

Finally, in proliferating media frames that further disconnect the non-Aboriginal reader from the drug addicted, Aboriginal sex trade worker, much effort by the *Sun* was placed on conjecture as to how the general readership should handle these atrocities. Continuous warnings were placed at the start of news articles warning the public of coverage of graphic details so the reader could pick and choose what he/she wished to hear.

> When the more complete story inside the paper contains disturbing information, a warning to that effect will appear on page A2. A warning will also appear on the top of any story that might require reader discretion (Graham, January 22, 2007, A3.
>
> What we consider our relatively safe, civilized and peaceful community is going to look rather ugly for a while (Graham, January 22, 2007, A3).
>
> How to answer kids' questions about the trial: Children will sense tone of Pickton event from media coverage, psychologist says (Hall, January 20, 2007, A4)

On a final note, it must be mentioned that a story in the *Sun* indirectly, but powerfully illustrates the clear disconnection between the police and the missing and murdered women. The article is entitled “Pickton's pigs in 'distress': Police officer cries as she tells of animals' sad state (Culbert & Hall, 20 February 2007, B1) and an excerpt is as follows:

> A veteran Vancouver police officer cried on the witness stand Monday as she [Const. Daryl Hetherington] described the condition of several pigs inside a stock trailer parked on Robert (Willie) Pickton's property (Culbert & Hall, February 20, 2007, B1).
>
> Const. Daryl Hetherington, who raises pigs in her personal life, started searching Pickton's farm on Feb. 7, 2002 and said she found several pigs in ill health inside a stock trailer outside the slaughterhouse (Culbert & Hall, February 20, 2007, B1).

Another article on the same topic adds:

> The trial heard testimony last week from RCMP Const. Daryl Hetherington, who broke into tears on the witness stand as she recalled that the pigs in the livestock trailer were hungry and some were in bad shape, including one with a severely injured foot (Neal Hall, 1 March 1, 2007, B6).

What is noteworthy from this coverage in the *Sun* is that although the subject of cruelty toward animals is disturbing and indicative of Pickton’s general attitude toward other living beings, it was the first and only mention of a public display of emotion on the part of any Law Enforcement personnel and any others who examined the crime scene throughout the trial.

From a discussion on the overarching narratives uncovered from the Vancouver Sun articles, it can be seen that dominant frames including Aboriginality, the sex trade,

drug addiction, discredited testimony, risk lifestyles, and counter frames including what is deemed to be a worthy, grievable woman along with how the public (in this case the readership of the Vancouver Sun), handle information pertaining to the case was permeated Vancouver Sun reporting of the case.

Chapter 4- Discussion and Conclusions

1. Intro

The preceding analysis sought to accomplish several research objectives. The first is to update the analysis of Jiwani and Young's (2006) study of the *Vancouver Sun* coverage of the missing and murdered women's cases from 2001-2006. One of the most important findings in the analysis of coverage from 2006-11 is validation of Jiwani and Young's original findings with respect to dominant narratives. Secondly, a brief outline of a similar series of cases from Juarez, Mexico was provided to highlight the many significant ways media coverage and the public's reactions to the atrocities differ in each locale and what is specific to the Canadian context of the violence. Finally, the emergence of new narratives or frames stemming from the trial of Robert Pickton and public inquiry and the chronicling of graphic evidence was documented.

In conclusion, the following pages consider the implications of these findings to the original research questions posed as well as to existing scholarship on the subjects of the missing and murdered women and to violence against women more generally. The thesis then concludes with some consideration paid to directions for further study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research was inspired by a desire to understand why the women of the DTES were maimed and murdered for over 3 decades before these devastating cases were deemed newsworthy. The approach through critical discourse analysis (CDA) of

identifying and analyzing media framing arguably goes some way toward making intelligible current thinking with regard to racism, sexism and post-colonial ideology in Canada. This research undertaking begins from the ontological position that public discourses are significant in that they constitute the dominant body of knowledge and therefore have the power to shape opinions held by the general public, and also the content and direction of public policy. Findings from this research support those of others (Chermak & Rome, 1994; Meyers, 2004) who show that the media play a significant role in perpetuating racist, sexist and elitist stereotypes that serve mostly to keep their readership distanced from victims of violence (Chermak & Rome, 1994; Meyers, 2004).

Many scholars have analyzed what makes a media report worth reading/ watching/ listening to (Chibnall, 1977; Katz, 1987; Greer, 2003). Factors such as the presence of conflict, loss of life, violence, the proximity of the reporting and the prominence of those involved are all said to be key factors in making a report newsworthy. Interestingly, the cases of the missing and murdered women had most of the attributes for newsworthiness for the decades during which there was very little media attention, save for the lack of social prominence of the victims and the fact that the DTES was an area of Vancouver specifically created to hold problem populations.

Non-coincidentally, Vancouver Sun media reports increased exponentially with the arrest of Robert Pickton and the way that reports were framed made the tragedy into more of a spectacle than the reporting of the tragic loss of life. By creating the isolated deviant in Pickton, media content concentrated on psychological/biographical looks into the mind of a serial killer, detailed and graphic images of the crime scenes, lurid details of the lifestyles of the women victims. Indeed, at times the women were presented more

as objects in a horror story rather than flesh and blood victims of real-life terror and violence.

Attempts in the *Sun* coverage to bring the women victims, their suffering and their personhood to the spotlight emerged only after the Pickton trial and the publication ban on the details of the crimes was still in place. These counter-frames included coverage of activist groups striving for recognition of violence towards sex trade workers, discussion of Aboriginal women and women and violence more generally, underscored by individual stories of the women victims and some critical discussion of why and how these crimes happen. Even within these counter-frames, however, disparaging discursive language appeared in descriptions of the women as choosing to live "risky lifestyles" and also by implying that their deaths should be grieved if only because they were someone's mothers, daughters, and sisters.

By the time an Inquiry into the crimes against the missing women was requested and granted, media emphasis quickly shifted to criminal legal matters, police inefficiency, and ways in which society could "control" the Downtown Eastside and mitigate the violence against women. Strategies included the outlawing of hitchhiking (again, placing the onus on the woman to protect herself) and funding to police and community groups for improved reporting and victim services (i.e. criminal-legal control over the situation). There was little discussion as to why a large, disproportionate number of Aboriginal women fell victim to these crimes. In sum, critical analyses of the structural causes of violence against women were lacking and although racism was mentioned in Vancouver Sun media coverage, no connection was made to it as a legacy of Canada's colonial past.

Clearly, these findings show that post-colonial attitudes are alive and well in Canada. Constructing the Aboriginal woman victim in media reports as mostly a drug addicted sex worker who lives a risky lifestyle by choice not only makes her a less grieve-able victim, it also serves to clearly demarcate the victim from the reader in significant ways. Considering the long history of colonialism in Canada, this is clearly the continuation of past post-colonial practice.

Because all of the victims of these crimes were women sex trade workers and a disproportionate number of them were Aboriginal, issues of gender, class and race did play a dominant role in media reports. From Razack (2002), however, if we accept the importance of the historical intersections of gender, race and class, then violence against Aboriginal women cannot be understood except through the lens of post-colonial theory. Findings from this research concur with those of Downe (2006:2) who concludes that the concept of a "lived history" is what describes contemporary Aboriginals. This is to say that "the abuses experienced by Aboriginal girls over the past 130 years are not isolated occurrences; they are connected to a pervasive colonial ideology that sees these young women as exploitable and often dispensable." (Downe 2006:2) The trauma of colonialism continues from generation to generation.

Persistent poverty and sexual exploitation, combined with racism and the ongoing dislocation of families adds up to a significant number of risk factors for women to become involved in the sex trade (Razack & Espinet, 1998:65). Once involved, race, gender and class continue to figure into mediated social constructions of these women as sex trade workers whose lives don't matter as much as those of others (Batacharya, 2006:181). It is by the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal girls through prostitution that

racism, sexism and poverty, all relevant factors in the cases of the missing women of Vancouver, collide as lived histories of colonization (Jiwani & Young, 2006).

In this research, feminist and post-colonial theoretical concepts such as "lived history" and "intergenerational trauma" (Bopp et al, 2006) are convincing explanatory devices for understanding the Vancouver missing and murdered women's cases. So too are theoretical perspectives that underscore the tendency for the poor to be cast as criminals who choose to live beyond the margins of respectability.

Contributions to the Discipline

This thesis is arguably of both scholarly and political importance. It contributes to existing postmodernist projects related to understanding multiple marginalities, discussions concerning the feminization of poverty, the criminalization of the vulnerable, and the legacy of colonization. It looks beyond a content analysis of isolated discourse to link the multiple marginalities expressed in media reports to expressions of post-colonialism in Canadian culture.

It must be noted that unlike media coverage of the cases of women missing and murdered in Juarez, Mexico, not once did the word *femicide* appear in any of the articles published in the *Vancouver Sun.* This research strongly argues for the use of the word *femicide* in relation to the DTES missing and murdered women's cases as it is defined as "the killing of females by males *because* they are female" (Russell, 1992). The gendered realities of our post-colonial history and the fact that colonial ideologies continue to exist and are shaped by patriarchy and misogyny, results in violence against women and

ultimately, the murder of women. Perhaps when we begin to acknowledge the cases of the missing and murdered women of Vancouver as cases of femicide, we can gain a better understanding of the issues and thus solutions to these problems.

It is also my hope that findings from this project challenge and educate those who uncritically write and consume media reports that perpetuate forms of inequality for some, while further entrenching the many advantages of others. This is indeed true in the case of media coverage of the missing and murdered women of Vancouver. Findings from this research study illustrate how the Vancouver Sun is a significant contributor to the maintenance of neo-colonialist ideals in Canada. And finally, it is my hope that if we fully acknowledge the ways in which we are complicit in constructing marginal populations in dominant discourse we can meaningfully address the social and material inequities that are only intensifying in contemporary society. After all, we need to know how we came to be where we are today in order to change the future.

Future Research

There are several possible paths to take for future work on the many topics related to this research project. The focus of this thesis was on the manner in which the missing women's cases were framed in media reports by the *Vancouver Sun* in the years 2006-2011 and illustrated how the coverage content reflects and perpetuates neo-colonial attitudes in Canada. As the inquiry is ongoing and results are still being released, one wonders if future media frames will transition toward those more critical of longstanding social and material inequalities and more sympathetic toward the victims. For that matter,

analyses of alternative media sources that covered the cases from 2006-2011 may provide very different dominant and counter frames.

While there is a significant amount of research on the subjects of drug use, prostitution and risky behavior as putting women at risk of violence, a large gap exists in attempts to explain where and by what means women end up in such places. It is not a coincidence that Aboriginal women in Canada are more likely to experience abuse, more likely to be imprisoned, more likely to live in substandard living conditions, and more likely to die as a result of abuse. There alarmingly high probabilities are clearly linked to a Colonial history in Canada that needs greater public awareness

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